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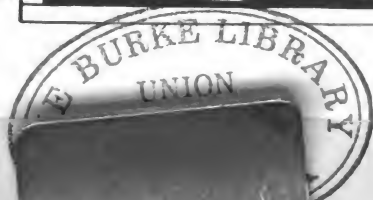
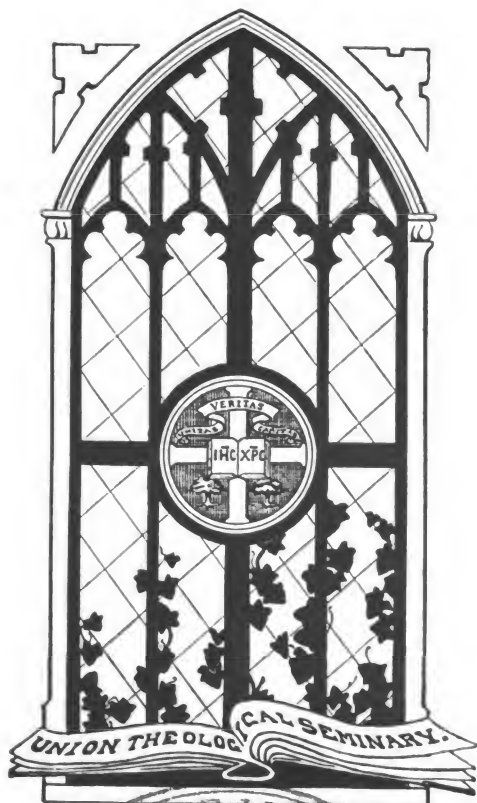
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Anchoresses of the West

Darley Dale

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1985

ANCHORESSES OF THE WEST

DECLARATION.

IN accordance with ecclesiastical decrees, the author of this work makes the following statements :—

If in the course of the work the title of Saint, Blessed, Martyr, Confessor, or the like, is ascribed to any one not actually canonised or beatified by the Apostolic See, it is done on mere human authority.

If, moreover, any miracle or vision or other extraordinary fact is related, the reality of such fact rests solely upon ordinary historical testimony.

In regard to the personal sanctity of persons or their marvellous deeds, it is not the intention or wish of the author to presume to anticipate the judgment of the Church.

In these and all respects, therefore, the work is unreservedly submitted to the correction of the Holy See.

(Signed) FRANCESCA M. STEELE.

11th January, 1902.

ANCHORESSES OF THE WEST

BY

FRANCESCA M. STEELE
(DARLEY DALE)

WITH PREFACE ON MYSTICISM

BY THE

VERY REV. VINCENT BENNAB, O.P.



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PREFACE.

THE would-be writer on Mysticism is confronted at the outset of his attempt by the impossibility of clearly defining his subject-matter. He may not say that Mysticism is a philosophical system or method unless he is prepared to prove the intellectual identity of Scotus Erigena and Schelling, of Porphyry and St. Teresa. He may not call it a philosophical mood unless he is capable of discounting its ethical features which are far from insignificant. If he bravely follows modern authorities and defines it as an "endeavour of the human mind to grasp the Divine essence or the ultimate reality of things, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the Highest," he will then have the mortification of knowing that the phrase "endeavour to grasp" has mercilessly shut out all those Catholic mystics who hold that no endeavour of the human mind can ever grasp the Divine essence. Let him, as some Catholic writers have done, boldly define it as the love of God; and he will have the satisfaction of holding that all men in a state of grace are mystics without knowing it. In this sense the humblest Catholic maid at her loom

or ploughman in his furrow is a mystic equally with Gertrude or John of the Cross.

To understand Mysticism we must take it to mean a union with God. But there are many kinds of union with God. Firstly, there is Substantial Union. Into that ineffable circle of communion the Undivided Three alone may enter. Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three in Person are one in substance or nature. The Divine prerogative is like the Divine name incommunicable. Had Eutyches succeeded in making the world believe in a Christ of only one nature, there would have been an end to the belief in the true God, One in Three.

Secondly, there is Hypostatic or Personal Union, or union of a created nature with one or more of the Divine Persons. St. Thomas holds that each of the Divine Persons separately or all the Divine Persons collectively or the Divine Nature by itself could have assumed one and the same human nature. Nay, that they could have assumed each and every created nature; and this, we may add, without risk of pantheism. Yet this unspeakable privilege belongs to one human nature alone—the adorable humanity of Jesus Christ. After the substantial unity and communion of the Three Persons in one nature, there is no unity, union, or communion so great as that of the One Divine Person in two natures.

Thirdly, there is Causal Union. There is the union between the Creator and all His creatures. It takes place in three ways by essence, presence and power.

Fourthly, there is an Intellectual and Affective Union with God—and this may be either natural or supernatural.

It is possible that a mind may come to discern the existence of a cause of the universe—a Supreme Being of high intellectual and moral capabilities. From this purely natural knowledge may spring a purely natural appreciation or love. There would then be a natural, intellectual and affective union between the Deity and the mind.

But on the supposition that God has made Himself known otherwise than through Nature and has revealed new traits of His Divine character, it is evident that a new knowledge and a new love are obtainable. This is the knowledge of faith and the love of charity. Every soul in a state of grace on this earth has this supernatural, intellectual and affective union with God.

By St. Paul the action of God placing some in this union is called a vocation—or calling. Now even as every soul in grace is called and borne to a position of pre-eminent union, so are there some, even of those supernaturally united by faith and charity, who are called here below to an extraordinary state of supernatural enlightenment and love. These are the mystics and saints.

The moral science which by principles and precepts shows how faith and charity may be developed in the soul through grace is called Ascetical Theology.

The moral science which by principles and precepts enables a soul to discern and correspond with God's extraordinary supernatural dealings with mind and heart is called Mystical Theology. The term Mystical Theology is first used in the work of the pseudo-Dionysius in a completely different meaning. There

it is the knowledge of God by way of negation. It is the science of recognising that God neither is nor has any of the limitations or imperfections of His creatures. I will not maintain that the modern phrase "Mystical Theology" is not the lineal descendant of its ancestor in Dionysius, but its meaning has been changed meanwhile.

Now it may be useful to distinguish between mystics and saints. Logically if not biographically a mystic is not necessarily a saint, nor need every saint be a mystic. Visions are not sanctity; nor is holiness rapture. There may have been saints who never had an ecstasy. There may have been ecstasies who could lay no claim to heroic virtue. A saint, then, is one who is called to an extraordinary fervour of supernatural love or charity here below. Some who are not saints may rank above saints in bliss. Newman may rank above St. Stanislaus; Lacordaire above St. Rose of Lima. Heroicity of virtue regards the quality of fervour, not the quantity of grace, whereas glory is measured out in proportion to the magnitude of grace, fervour being ensured by a residence in Purgatory.

The true mystic is one who receives an extraordinary supernatural, intellectual union with God; the false mystic is one who seeks it unduly, either in opposition to God, or by unaided reason, or as the end of life or as a substitute for holiness. The false mystic is detected by his false doctrines, his contradictions, his moral excesses, his obstinacy, his disobedience. The true mystic is recognised by his conformity

with dogma, his consistency, his asceticism, his teachableness, his obedience. False mystics sometimes found sects. True mystics sometimes found religious orders.

To false mystics ecstasy is a paradise, to true mystics it is sometimes a responsibility and a Divine trial of humility. The false mystic thinks that it is best to know God here below; the true mystic holds it best to love Him.

The false mystic says : " It is good for us to be here " ; the true mystic hastens down from the mount to the sick in body and soul, who are ever to be found at the mountain foot. The false mystic would steal Divine things; the true mystic bears them (*patitur divina*).

We may now hazard a definition of our subject-matter. A mystic is one who is called out of the ordinary level of Christian perfection to an extraordinary supernatural state of intellectual union with God. As a science, Mysticism gives the principles and precepts which enable the soul to discern, correspond with and safeguard God's dealings with the understanding. As a state, Mysticism is a combination of powers, habits and acts which are the condition or outcome of these dealings.

Whilst formulating these definitions we do not pretend that they are accepted or likely to be accepted by all writers, or even by all Catholic writers. Some of these latter would reason in this way. Habitual contemplation is the essence of the mystic state. Where there is

ordinary contemplation there is ordinary Mysticism ; where there is extraordinary contemplation there is extraordinary Mysticism. Hence there should be a division into ordinary and extraordinary Mystics. Furthermore, these writers would hold that there is a close relation between the three branches of Theology and the three classical divisions of the spiritual life. Thus :—

{ Moral Theology is the guide of the Purgative Way.
{ Ascetical Theology is the guide of the Illuminative Way.
{ Mystical Theology is the guide of the Unitive Way.

This manner of looking at the subject has the advantage of enforcing the all-importance of ordinary contemplation, and of bringing home to our minds that the root of all true Mysticism is that development of the ten commandments which we call Moral Theology. But writers like Meynard * prefer to confine Ascetical Theology to God's ordinary supernatural dealings with the soul in the Purgative, Illuminative and Unitive Ways, whilst including all extraordinary dealings under Mystical Theology. We have followed this view rather than the other. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. But when men are agreed about things it is childish to dispute about words.

Though no mention is here made of the affective element in Mysticism it is not to be supposed that biographically considered this element is wanting.

* *Traité de la vie Intérieure*, par A. Meynard, O.P.

We have logically distinguished the mystic from the saint, on the authority of Our Lord Himself, Who describes certain souls that prophesied in His name, having received supernatural enlightenment from Him, and yet were unknown to Him on account of their sinfulness of life. Yet we are far from saying that the true mystic is one whose life need not correspond with his supernatural enlightenment. We have merely insisted on the fact that Mysticism being derived from or at least akin to Mystery receives its name from the extraordinary supernatural relations between God and the human understanding. It is beside the point to object that there is a consensus of ascetical opinion on the supremacy of the affective over the cognoscitive union with God. We are not concerned to inquire which element is most necessary to a successful human life ; but which element is most necessary to the logical content of the word "Mysticism." Hence we are willing to admit that in point of fact true Catholic mystics are saints, or at least on the way to be saints. But we add the theological distinction that it is the affective element in their Mysticism which denominates them saints ; and the cognoscitive element which denominates them mystics. We are borne out in this by the general application of the word Mysticism to every endeavour, sober or fantastic, of the human soul to attain a contemplative union with the First Truth and the Supreme Beauty. Or to take a further example from the present work. Why is it that we instinctively give the name of mystics to the "ankres" and "ankresses"

who appear in its pages? There were many equally holy souls, no doubt, living their simple, busy, dutiful lives in the Rome, Paris, London, Bristowe of those days. To style them mystics we should have to do violence to the meaning of the word. Yet it is felt on all sides that these "ankres" and "ankresses" who shut themselves apart from the busy whirl of life in order to listen to God's eternal truth were mystics or the makings of mystics. It was not in mere weariness of their fellow-men, nor in the bitterness of disappointment, nor in the ambitious hope of mounting upwards unhelped and being like to God, that they parted with most of the innocent joys of life. They were enamoured of the "Divine cloud," the bright darkness of Divine mysteries hidden within them; they felt that His Divine Majesty, in the words of B. Julian of Norwich, had set up His "See" in their hearts. Their one aim was to blunt the world's after-images which haunted their thought, so that, if His Majesty thought fit, some passing image of hidden mysteries might be flashed upon their expectant soul.

Whilst on this point of theology we may accentuate a doctrine which is not without its weight in sorting the true mystics from the false. The mystic communications vouchsafed to certain privileged souls are based upon the subjective virtue of faith and the objective matter of revelation. The deposit of faith is given once for all, nothing further will be added till the end of time. As St. Thomas says: "In the time of grace the whole faith of the Church is built upon the revelation of the Unity

and Trinity made to the Apostles."* Nothing can be added or taken away whilst the Church of the Apostles endures. Revelations can add nothing to revelation. To proclaim a new gospel is to announce a new heresy. No need to analyse revelations that pretend to add to the deposit. Their pretension is their condemnation. The everlasting gospel of the Abbot Joachim was condemned because it was false, and it was false because it was new. Whereas true revelations, as St. Thomas goes on to remark, regard the great drama of human life and action. "At no time have there been wanting those who have had the spirit of prophecy, not for the proclamation of a new gospel, but for the guidance of human affairs."† If we read the lives of Christian mystics we are struck by the fact that their supernatural enlightenment regards either coming personal or public events such as sickness, death, plagues, schisms, heresies, or it regards the great mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity. This will account for the mystical phenomenon that the highest form of vision is that in which the soul seems to see the Blessed Trinity. Such visions whilst adding nothing new to the deposit of faith, yet serve to give theology a new image of Divine things. Hence it is advisable for the scientific theologian to rise from his St. Thomas or his Billuart and refresh himself with the Dialogue of St. Catharine of Siena or the Interior Castle of St. Teresa.

The connection of Mysticism with the cognoscitive powers of the soul may throw some light on another

* 2^a, 2^a.—Qu. 174, art. 6.

† *Ibid.*, ad. 3^m.

difficult question. Non-Catholic writers on Mysticism are apt to make a general charge of pantheistic tendencies against mystics as a class, whether it be the Mysticism of Brahma or of Buddha ; of the Persian Sufis or of the Neo-Platonists ; of St. Bernard or of Bd. Henry Suso ; of St. Teresa or of Scheffler ; of Henry More or of Schelling. In the above imperfect list of mystics a Catholic is chiefly concerned with Catholics, whom he would defend from every suspicion of pantheism. Willingly we concede that there are modes of expression even in Catholic mystical writings which have a pantheistic look. There is something startling at first sight in St. Peter's statement that by the boons of Jesus Christ we became "partakers of the Divine nature."* But St. John explains it by saying that by the indwelling of charity in our hearts through grace "we are now the sons of God ; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2). So, too, we have to give an orthodox meaning to the term "Deificatio" found in the pseudo-Dionysius, and its German equivalent "Ver-gotten," so common to the German mystics of the fourteenth century.

It must then be clearly borne in mind that the union which is aimed at or at least obtained is neither substantial nor personal, *i.e.*, hypostatic, but either intellectual or affective. A substantial union with the divinity would be thorough-going pantheism. A hypostatic union with the divinity would be a pseudo-

* *γέννησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως* (2 Pet. i. 4).

pantheism in which the creature would at length lose its created individuality and become merged or submerged in God. But the union described with such evident difficulty by the mystics takes place in the faculties and not in the essence of the soul.* To understand it let us agree with St. Thomas that even in this life it is possible to have a passing glance of the beatific vision of God's essence, not as a permanent endowment but as a transient act.† It is furthermore the doctrine of St. Thomas and his school that the Divine essence, of itself and not by the intermediary of any image, is united to the beatified understanding both as the principle and the terminus of the beatific knowledge.‡ Psychology informs us that as a necessary accompaniment of every intellectual act there is an idea (the medium or principle of understanding) and an internal word (the terminus of understanding). But as no created idea or word could either impress or express the infinite and increate truth, God takes this double office upon Himself. Well may we marvel how it comes to pass that the blessed do not lose consciousness of their own individuality! Yet by the light of glory the human understanding is so strengthened that in the blaze of that uncreated light and in the intimacy of that ineffable union wherein God becomes, so to say, the thought of their mind, the blessed are not merely con-

* We must not be taken to deny the doctrine of St. Thomas that habitual grace resides in the essence of the soul.

† 2^a, 2^e.—Qu. 175, art. 3, ad. 2^m.

‡ St. Thos., 1^a.—Qu. 12, art. 5. Billuart, *De Deo*, Diss. 4, art. 7.

scious of God, and of themselves, but conscious also of their acts, of their emotions and of their personal distinction from God, who is so closely knit with souls. There is no submergence of consciousness in the beatific vision. The poet's sentiment, "All rapture through and through," can only refer to the intensity of a deep emotion and not to the suspension of even the slightest element of consciousness. Neither our individuality nor the consciousness of our individuality suffers the least eclipse in the knowledge of that which is our perfect happiness. We are ourselves supremely in deed and in thought. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, yet not one jot or tittle of ourselves or of our self-consciousness is destroyed or dulled.

It is otherwise with mystics who are still on earth. Whatever extraordinary supernatural visions may be granted them, their state cannot be equivalent to that of the blessed with its phenomenon of supreme bliss and absolute self-consciousness. Even that profound mystic, St. Paul, when rapt to third heaven, where he caught sight for a passing moment of the Unveiled Presence, knew not whether he was "in the body or out of the body" when the vision was vouchsafed. In other words a fraction of his consciousness was submerged or suspended, retiring into potency whence it awoke afterwards into act. It is at once seen that this submergence or suspension of some threads of consciousness is an imperfection. Jesus Christ who had always the full and complete habitual view of the

beatific vision suffered no raptures or swoons. Tradition would seem to suggest the same of Our Blessed Lady. Yet she must have been granted incomparably greater and more frequent visions than St. Paul. It would be the very greatness and sublimity of her revelations that prevented her soul from losing any elements of her perfect self-consciousness. How zealously have theologians protested against the thought that this self-consciousness was suspended even for a moment on Calvary by a swoon of suffering! It is to be remarked, moreover, that in the lives of certain mystics the raptures so frequent in mid life are much diminished in their closing years. Yet of course whilst the human mind is not yet strengthened by the light of glory (*lumen gloriæ*) some slight suspension of consciousness must result, when God deals profoundly with the understanding. St. Francis of Sales ventures to analyse the psychology of this suspension in words that must be dealt with theologically in order to be understood as they ought. In his treatise on the love of God he writes: “. . . The whole soul and all its faculties fall as it were asleep and make no movement nor action whatever, except the will alone, and even this *does no more than receive* the delight and satisfaction which the presence of its well-beloved affords. And what is yet more admirable is that the will *does not even perceive the delight* and contentment which she receives, enjoying it insensibly, being not mindful of herself but of Him whose presence gives her this pleasure.” Again, “. . . The soul who in this sweet

repose enjoys this delicate sense of the Divine presence, *though she is not conscious of the enjoyment.*" *

It is this intellectual and affective union with the Divine truth, resulting in a partial suspension of consciousness in some of its outlying regions, which mystics call self-annihilation, or "Deificatio" or "Vergotten." But the restriction of self-consciousness is never anything but a consequence of man's unbeatified state.

We can now see how some phrases from mystical writings wear a pantheistic look. Everything that proclaims a diminution of consciousness would seem to include an *ipso facto* diminution of personality. To rise in the scale in being is to rise in self-consciousness. So that in the highest beings it is true to say that they either have no individuality or are conscious of their individuality. Whilst allowing the sphere of consciousness to be restricted in some partial unimportant regions, the mystics never for a moment doubted that in the effulgence of the highest miraculous illumination the soul could say with truth "I am I. God is God. I am not God. Though by His great mercy I am closely knit with Him and like unto Him, still our natures and persons dwell infinitely apart, and it is in thought only that we are linked together." †

* St. Francis of Sales, *The Love of God*. Trans. by H. B. Mackey, O.S.B., Bk. vi., ch. viii., p. 255.

† We might distinguish between essential and non-essential consciousness. We should then define a swoon as a suspension of essential consciousness. An ecstasy would be a suspension of accidental, occasioned by an increase of essential consciousness.

A common feature of mystic souls is their influence over their fellow-men. Had the "ankres" and "ankresses," whose fascinating lives form the story of this work, remained by their fireside all their life they would have drawn little attention. But as they fled from the world, the world followed them. It speaks much for their sound sense that almost every human sorrow came to the door of their cell to be undone. Even the trials of the hearth, the burden of poverty, the miseries of faction, all fled after those mystic souls who had fled God-wards in search of true peace. In centuries when luxuries were found only on the tables or in the halls of the rich, the lowliest Catholic spinning-maid or churl had the luxury of a ready sympathy and oftentimes other world-wise counsel. The times have changed. What our forefathers would have deemed luxuries are now the necessities even of the poor. Yet it may be questioned if the world is not the poorer by its sad dearth of that truly Christian luxury, the Mysticism of Christ's saints.

VINCENT McNABB.

August, 1902.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.		PAGE
INTRODUCTION	- - - - -	I
CHAPTER II.		
ANCHORITES AND HERMITS	- - - - -	11
CHAPTER III.		
EXTERIOR LIFE OF ANCHORESSES	- - - - -	21
CHAPTER IV.		
DAILY LIFE OF ANCHORESSES	- - - - -	32
CHAPTER V.		
INTERIOR LIFE OF ANCHORESSES	- - - - -	41
CHAPTER VI.		
CEREMONY OF ENCLOSING ANCHORITES	- - - - -	47
CHAPTER VII.		
EASTERN ANCHORESSES	- - - - -	54
CHAPTER VIII.		
EARLY ENGLISH ANCHORESSES	- - - - -	69

CHAPTER IX.

IRISH ANCHORESSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	PAGE 82
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------

CHAPTER X.

LATER ENGLISH ANCHORESSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	89
---------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

CHAPTER XI.

FRENCH ANCHORESSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	107
--------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

ITALIAN ANCHORESSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	133
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

GERMAN AND SWISS ANCHORESSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	154
------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

BELGIAN AND DUTCH ANCHORESSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	180
-------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XV.

SPANISH ANCHORESSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	206
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

RECLUSES' CELLS IN ENGLAND	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	217
----------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

TABLE OF ENGLISH RECLUSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	233
---------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

APPENDICES—

Office from Bishop Lacy's Pontifical for Enclosing of Anchorites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	252
Rule for Carmelite Recluses	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	256
INDEX OF RECLUSES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	259

Anchoresses of the West.

"DILECTUS MEUS MIHI ET EGO ILLI."—*Canticle of Canticles*, vi. 2.

CHAPTER I.

*Introductory—Monks of the Desert—Veiled Virgins—
Mystical Union—The Murate—Anchorites—Their
Rule—Grimlaic—Rader—Anchor-houses.*

THE special subject of this little work is anchoresses, of whose life we propose to give a short account, since although the life of an anchoress was very remarkable and wonderful in some ways, very little has been written about it.

This is perhaps only what we should expect, since the life of a recluse was a living death—a life hidden with Christ in God, and outwardly so monotonous and uneventful that very few people seem to have taken any interest in it.

We shall perhaps realise more what an extraordinary form of the religious life it was, if we try to imagine a modern English girl of twenty, or a widow of maturer age, living alone immured in a cell adjoining some church, the entrance bricked up, one window looking into the

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church, and another small window through which food could be passed looking into the churchyard, and the occupant under a solemn vow never to leave this cell alive. If we suppose for a moment that such a manner of living would be permitted in these days, we cannot conceive it possible that any woman, at any rate in this country, would be found willing to embrace it. Yet, although it was never a popular form of asceticism, there were in this same England of ours in mediæval times fair young English girls, differing outwardly but little from those of the twentieth century, who of their own free-will were enclosed in a small cell, in the bloom of youth, with the firm purpose of never leaving it till they were carried to the grave, or buried on the same spot.

If we could ask any of these anchoresses, as they were called, what moved them to embrace such a life, their answer would be "*Caritas Christi urget nos.*" Probably they were condemned by worldly people as mad even in those days when the Catholic faith was strong enough for such a life to be tolerated by the State and approved by the Church.

Little is known of the individual story of the greater number of these recluses. Traces of anchor-holds, as the cells of anchorites and anchoresses were called, are scattered up and down the kingdom, but more frequently than not the names of the occupants are lost in oblivion. Sometimes old episcopal registers record the enclosure of a certain recluse, from which the name and state of the enclosed person can be gathered.

Of the more remarkable mediæval recluses, such as

St. Wiborado, St. Colette, St. Hiltrude, Dorothea von Montau, and St. Viridiana, O.S.F., more details are to be obtained, for many have been canonised; and of general information as to the manner of life they led, the rule they followed, the spirit which animated them, their interior life of union with God, there is no lack.

Egypt was the birthplace of the solitary life; it was there that this form of asceticism originated. The spirit which drove the monks of the desert to live in caves and hermit cells in Lower Egypt, in Thebais and in Palestine was the same as that which urged girls and women to be enclosed in a narrow cell attached to a church in the middle ages; it was a passionate longing for union with God.¹

Externally there was also this slight similarity between the lives of the ancient Fathers of the Desert and the mediæval anchoresses—"the monk of the desert was a Carthusian, a Sister of St. Vincent de Paul, and a nun of the Good Shepherd all in one;"² to the hermit's cell came the poor, the suffering, the penitent, and the outcast for help, for refuge, and for counsel and comfort. To the window of the anchoress's cell, in the middle ages, also came the poor, the sinful, the suffering, for alms, for advice, for instruction in spiritual matters. But there was this crucial difference, the monk of the desert was at liberty to leave his cell if duty called him, whereas the

¹ "The secret of their mighty exodus is a passionate yearning for union with God." See Preface by Father Dalgairns, p. 6, to the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, translated from the German of the Countess Hahn-Hahn. Thomas Richardson & Son.

² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

anchoress could not if she would: she was immured for life. Later on, the distinction between the anchorite and the hermit was this: the hermit was a solitary person who wandered about at liberty, while the anchorite passed his whole life in a cell from which he never moved.¹

The earliest anchoresses led a life more akin to the anchorites of Egypt, Palestine, and Thebais, inasmuch as their cells were caves or in the desert, not attached to churches as in later times. Like them "they were the representatives of the supernatural aim of Christianity, and had received their direct authorisation from the words of our blessed Lord, 'Be ye therefore perfect, as My Father in Heaven is perfect.'"²

It was the custom in the early Church for virgins to be consecrated to God though they remained in their homes, living a life of retirement from the world. They were said to be "veiled," and they received a veil and a golden covering for the head called a "mitrella," from the Bishop, into whose hands was made the vow of chastity, which they took publicly in church.³ The mystical meaning of this term "veiled" was "hidden in Christ"; it may be called the keynote to the life of a recluse.

One of the canons of the Council of Chalcedon decreed if one of these veiled virgins married, she became "an adulteress to Christ," and she was branded and excommunicated, and her husband was liable to the penalty of death.⁴

¹ *British Monachism*, by Thomas Dudley Fosbrooke, p. 50.

² *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, p. 52, translated from the German of Countess Hahn-Hahn.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

In later times the term "vowess" was given to seculars who vowed themselves to Christ.

The rule by which these early anchorites and anchoresses strove to live was the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience given by our blessed Lord; they recognised that "the inexorable condition for union with God is not to be earthly."¹ To satisfy this desire of their souls the ancient monks of the desert, the old hermits, the early anchorites and anchoresses fled into the wilderness to hide from the world and its pleasures in caves and amid the rocks; the mediæval recluses, men and women, hid themselves in small cells, attached as a rule to some church; the principle which animated both classes was the same, escape from the world to be "hidden with Christ."

It is well to insist on this animating principle in the beginning, otherwise the life we are about to describe would be incomprehensible to many people. The monk of the desert was not alone in his cave, the mediæval anchoress was not alone in her cell: both had left the world to be with Christ, which they held to be far better.

This mystical union with the Divine spouse was the secret spring from which this strange life of desert monk and mediæval recluse drew its strength and power of endurance; it is the key to what would otherwise be an unfathomable mystery to the world. The present century is so completely out of touch with the anchoritic life that we are in danger of forgetting that it ever existed; faith in those days was so much stronger, so

¹ *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, p. 62.

much more real, so much more practical than it is now that it may be well to study a little this particular effect of its working, and unless we penetrate the motives which prompted this particular development of the religious life, a mere glance at the external life of recluses, a peeping through the anchoress's window, would be of little avail.

It is the thought which underlay this craving for solitude, for enclosure; the idea that clothed itself in the anchorite's habit, a scapular of goatskin or sheepskin; the principle that closed the entrance to the anchoress's cell that we want to master before we can sympathise with this strange mode of life. Much light is thrown on this subject by the revelations of Mother Juliana of Norwich, an English anchoress, of whom we shall have more to say, who lived in the fifteenth century (1343—1443).

We find in the thirteenth century a special form of enclosure practised by recluses (women) who were known as "Murate," from the walls within which they lived, which development seems to have been confined to Rome.¹ We learn that in A.D. 1216 a number of recluses lived each enclosed in a little cell separate from, though close to, each other, just outside the walls of Rome. They never left these cells; indeed, some of them were entirely enclosed in their cells, which were built in the walls;² their food was given them through a window just as was done to anchoresses in this country.

When St. Dominic was in Rome he used to visit these Murate almost every day. After he had said Mass he

¹ *History of St. Dominic*, by Miss Drane, p. 172.

² *Ibid.*, p. 209.

would go to their cells and give them advice and encouragement; he also administered to them the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, and acted as their spiritual director.¹ He was commissioned to do this by the Pope.

An old canon made at the Council of Trullo, A.D. 692, decreed that anchorites should for the first three years be confined in a cell in their monastery, if after this they persisted in their desire they were to be examined by the Bishop and then to live for one year at large; after this probation, if they still persevered, they were to be confined to their cells and not permitted to go out again except by permission of the Bishop in case of great necessity.²

A custom was introduced in the early ages of Monasticism in certain abbeys of choosing one of the religious who was considered the most advanced in perfection and enclosing him in a cell that he might devote himself entirely to a life of contemplation without any distraction.³ As in later times, this cell was so placed that the recluse could see the altar in the church and assist at Mass. The door was locked, often walled up, but a window through which the necessities of life were passed to him was left open.⁴

In Hélyot's "*Histoire des Ordres Religieux*," we learn that the same custom existed in convents of women, and that there were instances where men were enclosed as

¹ See *History of St. Dominic*, by Miss Drane, p. 172.

² See *British Monachism*, by Thomas Dudley Fosbrooke, p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See Fosbrooke.

anchorites in nunneries, and of women living enclosed in cells as anchoresses in abbeys of monks.

Charlemagne forbad the custom of enclosure in a cell, but nevertheless it prevailed in his time when a perpetual anchorage was supported at Vallombreuse. Here the recluse vowed perpetual silence, and saw no one except the brother from whom he received his food.¹

At the end of the ninth century a rule was written for anchorites by one Grimlaic, by which it was permitted to have a small yard joined to the cell, which was to be near a church, and many anchorites were permitted to dwell in one enclosure, after the manner of a Carthusian monastery; they were also allowed to hold communication with each other, but their cells must be separate.

These anchorites lived either on alms or by labour of their hands, or sometimes on what a neighbouring monastery bestowed upon them. Their habit was a frock, to which priests added a cape. If they were priests they had the right of hearing confessions; part of their duty was to learn the Gospels and other portions of Holy Scripture by heart.

The ceremony of enclosure was performed by the bishop, who put his seal on the door of the anchorage, which was only removed in case of sickness.²

The cells of anchorites were called in the middle ages anchor-holds, or anchor-houses, and they were not at first invariably close to a church or even to cities, though, as a rule, they were connected with abbatial or parochial

¹ See Fosbrooke.

² *Ibid.*

churches. Sometimes anchorites were placed in churches to look after them.¹

One Goluennus built for himself a small square house in the form of an oratory near the shore and there shut himself up; his cell was called a house of Penitence. Saint Goeznoneus built an oratory, in which he lived, in a grove near a river four miles from a city; his cell was known as the Penitentium Sancti Goeznonei.

Guthlac, who was our first English anchorite, built a chapel for himself in a retired spot, the remains of which, in 1843, were known in the neighbourhood as the anchor church-house.

An explanation of the old rule for recluses followed in Germany was given by Fr. Rader, S.J., in his "*Bavaria Sancta*," published in the year 1627. In this the cell was ordered to be built of stone and to be twelve feet square; it was to have three windows, one looking into the church, one covered with horn or glass for light and air, and one closed with a wooden shutter, which was opened to take in food. The recluse was to be provided with a dish or platter, a pitcher and a bowl; if a man, he was to wear his habit and cappa day and night, and in winter a fur cloak over it if no fire was allowed.

After terce the pitcher and plate were to be put outside the third window, which was to be closed again till after none, when the recluse might open it again and eat what was brought; if nothing was found, he was to say his grace and wait patiently till the next day. Three times a week he was to fast on bread and water, on the

¹ Parker's *Norwich*, p. 259.

other days to eat only Lenten food, and on Sundays and feast days milk was also allowed. By this rule recluses received Holy Communion once a week, on Sundays. They were only permitted to break silence between none and vespers. Many increased the severity of this rule, and went beyond it.¹

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI., p. 638.

CHAPTER II.

ANCHORITES AND HERMITS.

*Hermitages—St. David—William de Lacie—Ernicus—
Bridge-Hermits—Hermits Loricati—Anchorites—
St. Dunstan.*

AS later on recluses were obliged to live near a city or a monastery, sometimes almshouses were attached to anchor-holds for the support of the recluse, and Fosbrooke says anchorages were the great emporia of village news, a statement to be taken "*cum grano salis*," though, as we shall find when we come to the rule for anchoresses, gossiping was a temptation to which recluses were subject.¹

St. Dunstan made himself a cell attached to the Church of St. Mary's, Glastonbury, soon after he made his profession there as a monk, but it was of much smaller proportions than that permitted by the rule quoted by Rader, being only 5 feet by 2½ feet; it had a small window in the middle of the door, by the light of which he pursued his work of a goldsmith.²

An eminent holy anchorite of whom an account is given by Matthew Paris was Wulfric of Hazelborough,

¹ See Fosbrooke's *British Monachism*.

² *Ibid.*

who belonged to the Loricati, ascetics who wore iron corslets, which they never removed, next to their skin. He was born near Bristol. He was a priest, and in early life was very fond of hunting and hawking. He was converted by being informed by a beggar that he had money in his purse that he did not know of. He retired after his conversion to a cell adjoining the church of Hazelborough, in which on his death he was buried, by no means an unusual custom in the case both of anchorites and anchoresses. He was in the habit of saying the Psalter immersed in a tub of cold water at night. Strangers resorted to his cell for advice, but he never conversed with them except through the closed window.¹ This Wulfric is the same man as St. Ulrich.²

Anchorage were sometimes situated in churchyards, or over the church porch, and also at the old town gates, and often then had chapels attached to them.³

Anchorites were generally given the title of "Sir," as Sir Thomas the Anchorite;⁴ while anchoresses were frequently called "Mother"; sometimes they had the title of "Dame" or "Lady."

Several of our English anchorites, besides those already mentioned, have been canonised. St. Neot was an anchorite living in a cell at St. Guerir's town wall, now known as Neot-Stoke; he was of noble birth, and related to King Alfred; he took the habit at Glastonbury; he died about 877; his remains were afterwards

¹See Matthew Paris, pp. 78, 79.

²See Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

³Taylor's *Index Monasticus*, p. 65.

⁴*Ibid.*

removed to Ernulfsbury, Huntingdon, now called after him, St. Neots.¹ Butler tells us "to him is generally ascribed the foundation of our first and most noble university, in which he was King Alfred's first adviser."

St. David, the patron saint of Wales, was a recluse. He was the son of Xanthus, a prince of Wales, and took holy orders and became Bishop of Caerleon, in Monmouthshire, but afterwards removed his see to Menevia. He was always given to leading a strict, retired life, and had a small chapel in a solitary valley enclosed with steep hills on the banks of the river Hodein, in the north of Monmouthshire; from him it was called Llandhewin, *i.e.*, the Church of David; it is now known as Llanthony. His chapel, in which he lived a solitary life for many years, was "a poor building surrounded with moss and covered with shrubs; it would scarcely receive a man or beast."²

In 1103 Sir William de Lacie, Knight, renounced the world and retired to this same place, Llanthony, where he lived for many years as a hermit. The story goes that he was out hunting with his kinsman, Prince Hugh de Lacy, when he spied the chapel of St. David, and there and then cast off his belt for a rope, his fine linen for haircloth, and his soldier's armour for heavy irons, and devoted himself to the life of an anchorite.

For many years he lived in cold and nakedness in this wild lonely valley, described as so terrible a place that only a soldier would have dared to live there alone.

¹ Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

² *Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire*, by Sir R. Atkins, 1712.

Then he took priest's orders, and was joined by one Ernicius, chaplain to Queen Maud, wife of Henry I., who having heard of de Lacie's holy life wished to retire from the court and embrace what has been described as "the holy sabbath of a hermit's life."¹

In 1108 these two erected a mean church in place of their original hermitage, which was consecrated by the Bishop of Llandaff and Hereford and dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Still later these anchorites founded a monastery for the Black Canons of St. Austin, with the approbation of Anselm, then Archbishop of Canterbury, of which Ernicius was the first prior.²

In the seventh century a holy anchorite lived at a place called Cromhall, on a hill still known as Anchorites' Hill; the ruins of his cell were still standing in 1779,³ but have probably long since disappeared. There was a famous seminary in St. Augustine's time at Bangor, in Wales, and some of the monks from thence came to Cromhall to consult this anchorite, whose name is not recorded.

Fosbrooke mentions an instance of an anchorite and an anchoress living in adjacent cells. One Roger, a monk of St. Albans, was ordered to live as an anchorite by his superior in a small oratory; and Christina, an anchoress, lived in a cell close by; but he never saw her face, as she was so concealed by some wooden contrivance as to be invisible to anyone, even to those who brought her food. The door of her cell was a trunk

¹ *State of Gloucestershire*, by Sir R. Atkins.

² *Ibid.*

³ Rudder's *History of Gloucestershire*.

of a tree, too heavy for her to move. This Christina led a most ascetic life; she slept on cold stone, and was condemned to sit at her embroidery, for which she was famous, in silence. She could only summon Roger by knocking or calling, and this she was afraid to do as it might have revealed her retirement to others, which it is said she dreaded more than death.¹

In the middle ages hermitages at the ends of bridges were common in England. The inmates were called bridge-hermits; they were not enclosed like anchorites, nor did they live in caves or woods like true hermits, but wandered about in the day-time and returned to their hermitages at night to sleep. These hermitages, like those in the gates of towns, were often only a cell or a chapel; when they were larger they were used for hospitality to travellers.²

Hermitages passed under the advowson form in mediæval days; hermits said the Psalter daily; priests were favourite confessors, and it was generally believed that because of their sanctity they had the power of curing diseases and working miracles. They could possess property and make a will; and when eminent for their sanctity sometimes drew anchoresses round them, whose cells were built near the hermitage. Archbishops and bishops not unfrequently in olden times retired to end their days as hermits.³

In the days of Gregory Nazianzen hermits lived in

¹ Fosbrooke's *British Monachism*.

² Taylor's *Index Monasticus*, p. 65.

³ See Fosbrooke's *British Monachism*, p. 382.

caves and wore garments of skin and hair, but in later days their costume was a long gown covering the whole body, with armholes for the arms to pass through, and a hood for the head ; a rosary was attached to the girdle. They usually had very long beards, and their garments were often very ragged ; they used a rope for a girdle, and sometimes wore a hair shirt or an iron corslet under the gown.¹

According to Fosbrooke, hermits were sometimes rogues and vagabonds. There is probably truth in this statement, for in the episcopal register of Bishop Grandison, A.D. 1334, for the parish of Ashprington, in Devonshire, one William, a hermit, is cited to appear before the bishop or his representative on a certain date to answer certain charges which have been laid against him before the bishop. Apparently this William, under a veil of sanctity, had been preaching blasphemous and heretical doctrines to the danger of other souls ; he had also failed to make any promise of obedience to an ecclesiastical superior though still wearing the garb of a hermit, and was apparently insane.²

On the other hand may be cited one Godrich of Finchale, in Durham, a very holy hermit who lived in a cottage excavated out of the ground and covered with turf, to which was attached an oratory with a crucifix and an altar and statue of our Lady, and it also had a second altar dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Godrich knew the whole Psalter by heart, and in winter fre-

¹ See Fosbrooke's *British Monachism*, p. 382.

² See the *Register of Bishop Grandison*, A.D. 1334.

quently stood in frozen water up to his neck and recited prayers and psalms. He never ate without most urgent necessity, and then he reduced branches and roots of herbs to ashes and mixed them with barley flour; he often abstained from all food for six consecutive days. He wore a hair shirt and iron corslet for fifty years, and never slept in a bed, but on the ground, with a stone for a pillow. A priest said Mass in his cell on holidays.¹

Tewkesbury Abbey is named after one Theocus, a hermit, who had a cell on the site.²

Another celebrated hermit lived at Dursley, in Gloucestershire, at the top of a hill near Nibley Park. He is generally known merely as the Hermit of Dursley.³

One of the Trullan canons decreed that hermits who strolled up and down in towns in black habits and long hair and conversed with women as well as with men, should either be shorn and sent into some monastery, or be driven into the wilderness.⁴

We have made no mention here of the early anchorites of the desert, whose lives are fully recorded by the Countess Hahn-Hahn in her famous work "The Fathers of the Desert," because we are concerned specially with anchoresses, but it seemed advisable to mention briefly these other phases of the life of solitaries, especially those which penetrated to this country, where "up to the very moment of the Reformation"⁵ the anchoritic form of devotion continued.

¹ Fosbrooke's *British Monachism*. ² Rudder's *History of Gloucestershire*.

³ Smythe's *Berkeley Hermitage MS.*, fol. 179. ⁴ Fosbrooke.

⁵ See Preface by Father Dalgairns to *The Scale of Perfection*, by Walter Hilton.

There are still many records of foundations for the maintenance of both anchorites and anchoresses in existence in England, and several Pontificals contain the office for their enclosure.¹

Recluses were often buried in their cells.² In olden days they imposed on themselves the task of digging their own graves. There are several cases recorded, both of anchorites and anchoresses, who preferred death and martyrdom rather than break their vows of enclosure. In Taylor's "Index Monasticus" mention is made of an anchorite living within the walls of the church of Our Lady in Meux, in France, at the burning of that city by William the Conqueror, who suffered martyrdom rather than leave his cell.³

In Normandy two anchoresses were burnt to death in a church which had been set on fire, because they refused to break their vows by leaving it.⁴

Recluses in this country were under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese in which they resided.

The more correct form of the words anchorite and anchoritic is anachorite and anachoretic; they are derived from the Greek words *ana*, a prefix, and *chorea*, to retire; anchoress is the feminine form of anchorite. Anchoritess is also used by some writers.

Hermit, or "eremite," is derived from the Greek word *eremos*, a desert, in which hermits usually lived.

Recluses were sometimes called "includes." Both

¹ See Preface by Father Dalgairns to *The Scale of Perfection*, by Walter Hilton.

² *Gough's Monuments*, Vol. I., p. 29.

³ See Taylor's *Index Monasticus*, 1821, p. 14, Introduction.

⁴ *Ibid.*

words mean the same, shut up or shut in, and are derived from the Latin *re* or *in*, and *clausus*=shut up or enclosed. They are also called solitaries, and Rader of Bavaria called the rule for recluses which he quoted a "Rule for Solitaries." In mediæval days the cell of a recluse was called the anchorite's house (*domus anchoritæ*), or a reclusory (*recluserium*).

In the beginning, recluses, like hermits, had no fixed rule; the length of time the enclosure was to last, the prayers they said and the mortifications they practised were left either to their own choice or to that of their spiritual guide, but certain hours were always given up to manual labour.¹

Later, when abuses crept in, the bishops passed in synod certain rules affecting recluses in the seventh century, when it was decreed the enclosure should last for life; but the first written rule was that of Grimlaic, in the ninth century. This was founded on the Benedictine rule, by which the recluse was bound to earn his food by manual labour, and to pass a strict novitiate of a year in a convent cell.²

Both anchorites and anchoresses were frequently at this time enclosed within the precincts of some Benedictine abbey; they were affiliated, as it were, to the order under whose protection they lived. Later, when the great Benedictine abbeys were less powerful, many recluses followed the Augustinian rule, and lived en-

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon*, Wetzter and Welte (Freiburg in Breslau), 1889, Vol. VI., p. 631.

² *Ibid.*, p. 635.

closed in priories of the Augustinian Canons and Canonesses Regular. Later still, when the Cistercian order reached its golden age, they followed the Cistercian rule, and were enclosed in the cloisters of Cistercian convents or monasteries.¹ At all times there appear to have been isolated recluses living under no particular rule.

It is calculated that in a desert called Cellia, or the cells in Nitria, in Egypt, there were at one time five hundred monks living as solitaries. There were numbers also in the desert of Scete, on the borders of Lybia, and in the time of the Emperor Constantine there were about two thousand monks dispersed in cells and caves living at Antinopolis, whereas only a very few instances like those quoted above, of women leading a solitary life, are on record during the first five centuries of the Christian era.²

Later on, from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries, the number of anchorites who were raised to the altar is far in excess of that of anchoresses who have been so honoured; yet from the twelfth century to the Reformation, there seem to have been at least as many women as men living as recluses in England.

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon*, p. 639.

² *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, pp. 404, 405.

CHAPTER III.

EXTERIOR LIFE OF ANCHORESSES.

False and True Anchoresses—Foxes and Birds of the Air—Gossip—Other Temptations of Anchoresses—Their Vows—Their Servants—Their Dress—Forbidden to keep Animals—Their Visitors—Their Means of Support.

IT is evident from the books which were written for the use of recluses, such as "The Ancren Riwe" and "The Scale of Perfection," that the life of an anchoress was full of temptations, some of a kind common to all, others incidental to her special calling. It is also clear that all recluses were not saints; the author of "Ancren Riwe" distinctly says there were two kinds of anchoresses, the false and the true, and he appositely quotes the text, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests," and he goes on to draw out the comparison between foxes and false anchoresses, and the birds of the air and the true anchoresses.¹

False recluses who gather worldly goods are, he says, like foxes, for, like a fox, they have a simple appearance,

¹ *The Ancren Riwe*, edited and translated from semi-Saxon MS. of 13th century, by James Morton, B.D., Vicar of Holbeach, 1853, Camden Society, p. 129.

and yet are full of guile, and he asks, "Who can with more facility commit wickedness than a false recluse?"¹

Again he compares a false recluse with Saul, whose name means "abuse," or abusing, and a true recluse with David. Again, true recluses are said to be "like birds who have set up on high their nest, that is rest; who, though they fly high, hold their head low through meek humility." "True anchoresses fly aloft and sit on the green boughs, singing merrily, that is, they meditate enraptured upon the blessed of heaven that is ever green."²

This comparison of anchoresses with birds is beautifully drawn out; the false or carnal anchoress is said to be like an ostrich, which pretends to fly but his feet always draw him to earth. Then he compares anchoresses to the night-fowl dwelling in the eaves, because recluses dwell under the eaves of the church, and an anchoress should be watchful and diligent in the night since her duty is to watch much.³ "In the night too she must be on the wing seeking heavenly food."

Then a good anchoress is compared to a solitary sparrow sitting alone under a roof; so, says our author, ought an anchoress to be chirping and chattering her prayers.⁴ He advises recluses to imitate the eagle, who "puts an agate in her nest so that no poisonous thing may harm her birds; so should the anchoress put Jesus Christ in her nest, her heart."⁵

A good anchoress is compared to Judith, "who made herself a private chamber in the upper part of her house,

¹ *The Ancoren Riwele.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

in which she abode shut up with her maids. And she wore haircloth upon her loins, and fasted all the days of her life.”¹

Then in his quaint plain language, the author says, “Judith betokeneth an anchoress who ought to lead a hard life, and not like a swine pent up in a sty to fatten.”² A good anchoress is, he says, “a Judith who fasteth, watcheth, labours, and weareth haircloth.”

For false anchoresses the author has some very unflattering comparisons. A testy anchoress is compared to a pelican, a lean peevish bird who kills her own young. “I am like a pelican in the wilderness,” said the Psalmist. This, says our writer, is the peevish recluse.³

An angry woman is, he says, like a she-wolf; “and what if any recluse, Jesus Christ’s spouse, is transformed into a she-wolf?”⁴

A worldly anchoress is compared to Shemei, whose name means “hearing”; “this means an anchoress who hath asses’ ears, long, to hear from far.”⁵

Gossiping was evidently the most besetting sin of false anchoresses; it was the charge most frequently brought against them, and it is the sin against which this Richard Poore, the probable author of “*The Ancren Riwle*,” is most severe. He says “that people say of anchoresses that almost every one hath an old woman to feed her ears, a prating gossip who tells her all the tales

¹ *Judith*, viii. 5, 6.

² *The Ancren Riwle*, p. 127.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

of the land. From mitre and from market, from smithy and from nunnery men bring her tidings." ¹

In another place he speaks of "prying, peering, gossiping, prating, listening anchoresses." ² And elsewhere he says there are some anchoresses who would fain become preceptors, and teach him who should teach them, so that they may be known as wise; "let such an anchoress know she is a fool." And he advises such an one to "imitate our Lady, and not cackling Eve." ³

Though silence was not compulsory, this writer advises anchoresses to keep silence as much as they can and may; they were allowed to ask counsel of any spiritual man who came to visit them, but, says Richard Poore, "Believe secular men little, religious still less; our Lady feared speaking with Gabriel." ⁴ He urges them to consult with women only, and forbids them to preach or give advice to any man unless he be very forward, and then a holy aged anchoress may rebuke him.

Another temptation to which recluses were liable was looking out of the window. This habit is severely reproved by the writer of "*Ancren Riwe*." "It is evil above evil to look out, for the young especially; an old recluse may do that well which thou young doest ill." ⁵

Again we read, "Love your windows as little as possible, and see that they be small, the parlour's smallest and narrowest." ⁶ They were not to speak at all at the church window, because of the Blessed Sacrament on the altar.

¹ *The Ancren Riwe*, p. 89.

² *Ibid.*, p. 892.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

The parlour windows were to be covered with cloth, black cloth with a white cross upon it, and this cloth was to be two-fold and the cross on both sides; the white cross was appropriate to white and unstained maiden purity.¹ This direction was meant specially for the three anchoresses for whom "*Ancæn Riwle*" was originally written. The author expressly says at the beginning of the book that "every anchoress must observe the outward rule according to the advice of her confessor,"² but from the advice given in this old semi-Saxon treatise we can gather what the external life of an anchoress was like.

He cautions them to "see that their windows were fast on every side and well shut, and to mind their eyes lest their heart should escape like David's," for he adds, "there are some staring anchorites of enticing looks and manners."³ They were not to be seen by any man unless by a religious, who had permission from his superior, and he warns them that "our foe the warrior of hell shoots as I ween at one anchoress more than at seventy-seven secular ladies."⁴

St. Ælred of Rievaulx,* in his "*Rule for Anchoresses*," founded on the Cistercian rule, which he wrote for his own sister, an anchoress enclosed in a Cistercian convent, warns her that "among the good some very bad come and sit down before the anchoress's window, and after a few pious speeches run off to secular matters. Thence

¹ *The Ancæn Riwle*, p. 57. ² *Ibid.*, p. 7. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 57. ⁴ *Ibid.*

* Called also Aelred or Ælred of Rievesley; he was Abbot of Rievesley in Lincolnshire first, then of Rievaulx in Yorkshire; in the Roman Missal he is called St. Elred of Rievaulx.

she began to frame love affairs, and pass nearly the whole night without sleep.”¹

Anchoresses as a rule took three vows, of which two, chastity and obedience, were the same as those taken by all religious, but instead of the vow of poverty, they took a vow of constancy as to abode; they were bound to remain in their cells for the remainder of their lives unless necessity, compulsion, fear of death, or obedience to their superiors or to the bishop obliged them to change.² They might vow other things if they liked as well, such as perpetual abstinence, but Richard Poore says “to keep themselves unspotted from the world” was the rule laid down for them by St. James, of whose order they were to say they were, if asked to what order they belonged.³

Anchoresses did not invariably live alone, sometimes two or three, or even more, lived together. The anchoresses for whom “*Ancren Riwe*” was written, for example, were three sisters living together at Tarente, in Dorsetshire, called also Tarrant Caines or Kingston.”⁴

Very often an anchoress, though enclosed in her cell, which was generally adjoining the church, had two servants living in her house to bring her food and wait on her, fetch wood and water and be a kind of lay-sister to her. If the anchoress had visitors the maids were to entertain them; they were also to let her know who the visitor was before she went to the window to speak to

¹ *Riwe of a Recluse*, by St. Ælred of Rievaulx, quoted by Fosbrooke.

² *Ancren Riwe*, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Preface to *Ancren Riwe*, p. xiii.

him or her. Of these two maids, one was always to stay at home, and the other only to go out when necessary, to buy food or fetch wood for the fire.

The author of "*Ancren Riwle*" ordered that the maid who went out was "to be very plain and of sufficient age, and as she goeth let her go singing her prayers,"¹ a custom which apparently attracted less attention in the thirteenth century than it would do in the twentieth. She is further enjoined "to hold no communication with man or woman, nor to sit down nor stand except the least possible till she got home," and she must only go to the place she was sent to, and is not to eat or drink abroad without leave.²

The anchoress's maids had to observe certain rules, as we shall see when we come to describe the rule for anchoresses, and they were specially enjoined by Richard Poore to be obedient to their dame. St. Ælred of Rievaulx also gave directions about these servants. He desired "that an old woman should be chosen, not garrulous, not litigious, not gadding about, not a tale-bearer."³ She was "to guard the door of the cell and admit and repel whom she ought." She was to have a girl to carry burdens, fetch water and wood, and dress beans or pot herbs for her mistress, or, in case of her illness or infirmity requiring it, to procure better food.⁴

The servants of anchoresses received no wages, only food and clothing.

The ordinary dress of an anchoress would appear to

¹ *Ancren Riwle*, p. 25.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Riwle of a Recluse*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, St. Ælred; quoted by Fosbrooke.

be a black habit and a black veil, but apparently more liberty within certain bounds was allowed to anchoresses in external matters such as food and dress than to other religious. Richard Poore told his three anchoresses that their clothes might be either white or black, only they were to be plain, warm, and well made. His directions on this subject are couched in very quaint language, but warmth is specially insisted upon. Their shoes were to be thick and warm, but in summer they might sit bare-foot, and "wear hose without vamps,* and whoso liketh may lie in them."¹

Of "skins well tawed † they might have as many as they needed for bed and back." Linen, or "flaxen-cloth," as he calls it, next the skin was forbidden unless it was of "hards" ‡ or of coarse canvas, but at the same time he allows a garment called a "stamin" to be made of either wool or linen to be worn. If they did not wear wimples they were to have warm capes and black veils over them. Rings, brooches, ornamented girdles, and gloves were all forbidden.²

He also forbad these particular anchoresses to wear haircloth or iron or hedgehog skins, but many holy anchoresses wore both haircloth and iron corslets.

St. Ælred forbad clothing of value, and decreed that his sister, for whom he wrote his rule, was to wear a garment made of skins in the winter, called by him a "warm

¹ *Ancren Riwle*, p. 21.

² *Ibid.*

* Vamps = a kind of stocking formerly used.

† = to dress leather; A.S., *tawian*, to prepare.

‡ Hards = the refuse of flax or wool.

pilch," * and a "kirtel"; † in summer she was to wear a "coat," and both summer and winter a black habit was to be worn over these somewhat mysterious garments, and a veil of "mean black," not of any "precious cloth."¹

The anchoresses' servants were ordered in "*Ancren Riwe*" to wear such garments and attire that it might easily be seen to what life they were dedicated; their hair was to be cut short, and their "head-cloth" to "sit low," their "hesmel" to be high-pointed, and they were to wear no brooch.²

Richard Poore forbad his anchoresses to keep any animals except a cat; the " anchoress's cat " is often spoken of in old books, and apparently some rich women who became anchoresses kept cattle, for he says, " it is odious when people in the town complain of the anchoresses' cattle," and adds that if they must have a cow they must take care that it annoys no one, and also that their thoughts are not fixed upon it.³

It would seem that some anchoresses took charge of other people's property, for he also especially warns his anchoresses not to do so, nor even to take care of Church vestments or the chalice unless they were forced to do so.⁴

It would seem that sometimes travellers, especially religious women, received hospitality in the houses of anchoresses, for St. Ælred of Rievesley says that care is to be taken that the anchoress is not burdened in

¹ See Fosbrooke.

² *Ancren Riwe*, p. 425.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 419.

⁴ *Ibid.*

* Pilch = a furred gown.

† Kirtel; A.S., *kirtle*, a petticoat, a gown, a short jacket.

showing hospitality to religious women. Richard Poore, by forbidding his anchoresses to allow any man to sleep within their walls, implies that women were sometimes allowed to do so.

They were allowed to admit visitors occasionally to meals in their houses, but not in their cells. The maid was to entertain the guest, and the anchoress to open her window two or three times and make signs that she was glad to see her, for he says, "an anchoress ought to be very different to the mistress of a family."¹

In another place the author of "*Ancren Riwe*" says there are anchoresses who take meals with their friends outside the convent, but this he blames as "most contrary to the order of an anchoress who is dead to the world."² He also forbids his anchoresses to allow any man to eat in their presence except he be in great need, neither must they invite him to drink anything. They are not to be "courteous anchoresses, for from the courtesy of an anchoress and her liberality sin and shame have often come."³

The anchoresses of Tarente were allowed to give to the poor any fragments of food that they could spare, but they were themselves to live on alms as frugally as they could, and they were not to beg in order to give away.⁴

Some anchoresses were rich women with fixed rents,⁵ others were dependent entirely on the alms of the faithful; others lived in an anchorage or cell which was

¹ *Ancren Riwe*.

² *Ibid.*, p. 415.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

⁵ *Ibid.*

perpetually endowed;¹ others were dependent on the great house of the parish in which they lived, from whence their food was sent daily.

Often they received more than was necessary for their maintenance, for Richard Poore warns the three sisters for whom he wrote not to become "gathering anchoresses,"² and they were to give nothing away without leave from their confessor.

¹ *Index Monasticus*, by Richard Taylor, 1821, p. xiv., Introduction.

² *Ancren Riwe*, p. 419. See also *Essay on Mediæval England*, by Father Dalgairns, S.J., prefixed to *The Scale of Perfection*, by Walter Hilton.

CHAPTER IV.

DAILY LIFE OF ANCHORESSES.

*Calumny against Recluses—Blomefield—The "Grille"—
Hypocritical Recluses—Prayer their chief occupa-
tion—Church embroidery—Not bound to perpetual
silence—Visitors—Fasting—Watching.*

ANCHORESSES have not escaped the abuse which Protestant writers have heaped on the religious orders, and the fact that there were false anchoresses has, of course, lent colour to some of the calumny that has been spread against them. Fosbrooke was no admirer of the anchoritic life; he doubts whether anchorites were generally respected in England, probably having heard of some such case as William the Hermit, whom we have already mentioned. In another place he says, "female anchorites were not always steady" (meaning constant), and he quotes an instance in the reign of Henry VI. of one Isolde Heton, a widow, who, having petitioned the King to let her be admitted as an anchoress in the Abbey of Whalley, in Lancashire, afterwards went away disgusted, and he adds that others had done the same before. He also brings charges of immorality against the servants of recluses.¹

¹ Fosbrooke's *British Monachism*, p. 490.

Another writer on the religious orders, John Kirkpatrick, mentions "an anchorite in the monastery of the White Friars, as in those of the other friars, dwelling as another bait to catch the money of superstitious people," so his opinion on the life of recluses does not appear to be high.¹

In Blomefield's "History of Norfolk" several pages are devoted to the abuse of anchoresses, because he says there were many anchorites and anchoresses in the city of Norwich, and, as few people knew what they were, he proceeds to give an account of what he thought them to be for the edification of his readers. He prefaces his remarks by saying he has been unable to find out how "the profession of anckers and anckeresses had the beginning and foundation, although in this behalf I have talked with men of that profession which could very little or nothing say in the matter."²

He has heard that anchoresses take Judith as their patroness and foundress, and he goes on to compare Judith's manner of life and conversation with that of our recluses, who, he says, differ from "that holy and virtuous woman as light from darkness or God from the devil." Judith, he says truly, wore haircloth, and so we know did many anchorites and anchoresses, though this author says they "were softly and finely apparelled." Again, he says that Judith fasted all the days of her life, but he accuses recluses of "eating and drinking at all times of the best," and other charges he brings against

¹ *History of the Religious Orders*, by John Kirkpatrick, written about 1725.

² Blomefield's *History of Norfolk*, 1806 edition, Vol. IV., p. 81.

them to which no weight is attached, as it is plain the writer was so prejudiced against the Catholic religion that he could not see how holy many of these recluses whom he accuses of being "superstitious and idolatrous" were. He falls foul of them because they obey the Pope "and gladly do what his pleasure is to command them," and again he blames them because, "unlike Judith, who came out of her cloister to do good to others, they never come out of their lobbies, sink or swim the people,"¹ ignoring the fact that anchorites and anchoresses were under a vow never to leave their cells. Had they left them under any pretence, we may be quite sure that Blomefield and other Protestant writers would have been the first to cast a stone at them.

The "grille" at the parlour window was another rock of offence at which this writer girded. "Our recluses have crates of iron in their spelunckes and dennes out of which they look as owls out of an ivye todde, when they will vouchsafe to speak with any man at whose hand they hope for advantage."²

It is not surprising to find this writer, who, it is clear, had no conception of the inner life of a true recluse, nor any idea of the value of a life of prayer, denouncing anchorites and anchoresses "as unprofitable clods of the earth, doing no good to no man."³

That abuses crept into the anchoritic life is undoubtedly true, for on that account we find in the middle of the seventh century the bishops were obliged to

¹ Blomefield's *History of Norfolk*, p. 82.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

make rules which were decreed at a synod, for those who followed this mode of life. For, while on the one hand some recluses had overestimated their power to overcome the dangers of the enclosed life, others had adopted it merely to escape from a strict abbot and to indulge their own self-will. Accordingly it was decreed at the seventh synod of Toledo that in future no one should give himself up to this form of asceticism unless he had lived in a monastery and learnt the practice of the religious life.¹

In 692 the Trullan synod passed a similar canon, and added that the time to be spent in the convent must not be less than three years, and if the recluse had once entered his cell he must never again leave it. In 794 the synod of Frankfort decreed that in Germany no one could be a recluse without the consent of his abbot and the bishop of the diocese.

After these decrees had been passed and it was understood that these obligations were indispensable, the institution of this form of life extended greatly,² for it was formally recognised by the bishops as one form of the ascetic life, though it did not on that account escape severe criticism.

That "sometimes hypocrites were found among recluses"³ is acknowledged by Father Dalgairns, S.J., to be true, but there are hypocrites to be found in all conditions of life, and as it does not seem probable that many

¹ From *Kirchen Lexikon*, Wetzer and Welte, Vol. VI., p. 638.

² *Ibid.*

³ See *Essay on Spiritual Life*, by Father Dalgairns, S.J., prefixed to *Scale of Perfection*, by Walter Hilton.

would have chosen to be immured in a narrow cell, we may take it these were the exceptions. As a rule, recluses were undoubtedly very holy persons, and their advice on spiritual matters was frequently sought; they often acted as directors, and many souls came to the anchoress's window for consolation and guidance.¹

Some anchoresses were occupied in teaching girls, but this was not approved by St. Ælred, who complains of those who turn their cells into schools, nor by Richard Poore, who says an anchoress must not become a school-mistress nor turn her anchor-house into a school for children; she ought to give her thoughts to God only.² He, however, permitted the anchoress's servant, in exceptional cases, to teach little girls.

Although anchoresses were to be Maries rather than Marthas, they were on no account to be idle. Prayer was of course their principal occupation; they generally said the Divine Office. Those who could not read are enjoined by the author of "*Ancren Riwe*" to say thirty Paters and Aves in place of Matins, but it would seem that many were bound to rise at midnight to say Matins. Meditation and mental prayer occupied a good deal of their time; reading of spiritual books, both French and English, and other devotions besides those prescribed in "*Ancren Riwe*" are recommended by the author to be followed according to the inclination of their hearts.³

In prayer, as in other matters, greater liberty was allowed to recluses than to other religious, for, as Richard Poore says, "the external rule of recluses was only an

¹ *Essay on Spiritual Life.*

² *Ancren Riwe.*

³ *Ibid.*

instrument to promote their religion, it was only the handmaid or slave of the inward rule, which," he says, "was the lady, and that was always alike, whereas the external rule or the servant might vary according to circumstances."¹

Anchoresses are enjoined by this author to teach their maids the rule, and to read parts of "*Ancren Riwe*" to them every week; they were to do this gently and affectionately.

Church embroidery was a great occupation of anchoresses. They often had the care of the Church vestments, which they made and mended; they also made clothes for the poor, and the anchoresses of Tarente are told that they are to make their own clothes and their servants', but are advised that the coarser works they do the better, and they are forbidden to make silken purses.²

It appears some anchoresses sent presents of silken purses they had made to priests and monks, for St. Ælred forbad his sister to send "girdles or purses made of various coloured straw or diversified under a case or covering and other things of this sort to young monks or clerks (*i.e.*, in holy orders).³

Writing and receiving letters was also forbidden, both by him and by Richard Poore, except with leave of the anchoress's confessor.

Ornamenting the walls of the cell with various pictures or carvings, or the oratory with a variety of tapestry and

¹ *Ancren Riwe*, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 421.

³ *Riwe of a Recluse*, quoted by Fosbrooke.

images is condemned by St. Ælred as conducing to vanity.¹

Anchoresses were not bound, except by special vow, to perpetual silence; those for whom "*Ancren Riwe*" was written were to keep silence at meals, and every Friday unless it was a "double," and then silence was to be kept on another day of the week instead; on all the Ember days, three days a week in Lent, all Holy Week till noon on Easter Eve, and on Wednesdays and Fridays in Advent.²

They were never to speak to any visitor except in the presence of a witness; even at confession a third person was to be present.³

Silence was always to be kept, even by the maids, from the anchoress's compline till after prime the next morning, so as not to disturb her silence.⁴

St. Ælred forbad his sister to speak to any visitor except the bishop, abbot, or a prior without the permission of her confessor, and then only in the presence of another person. "She might speak with some old priest of sound morals and good character who should if possible be provided in the neighbouring monastery or church, but this conversation was to be concerning confession and edification of soul or for advice in doubtful affairs or consolation in sad."⁵

Strict directions as to the reception of visitors who came to the anchoress's window are laid down in "*Ancren Riwe*." The recluse is to learn of the maid

¹ *Riwe of a Recluse*..

⁴ *Ibid.*

² *Ancren Riwe*..

⁵ Fosbrooke's *British Monachism*.

³ *Ibid.*

who has come before she goes to the parlour window, and then she is to make the sign of the cross on her mouth, ears, eyes, and breast, and, if it is a priest, to say the "Confiteor." Should any visitor fall into evil discourse, the anchoress is to shut the window directly and go away saying "The wicked have told me foolish tales" that he may hear, and then to say the "Miserere" before her altar and to "keep her voice and face for Jesus."¹

Since the external rule for anchoresses varied according to circumstances, great diversity prevailed among them; some were attracted to a life of very severe penance, others were old and infirm, others delicate and unable to fast, so that in such matters as meat and drink, unless they had made a special vow, they were at liberty to please themselves or to follow the rule laid down for them by their confessor. Many recluses lived on the poorest and plainest food, and very little of that; and we gather from the author of "*Ancren Riwe*" that this was the general custom among them, for in speaking against the sin of gluttony he says, "Would an anchoress be dissatisfied with the mistrum (gruel) or the scanty meal of unsavoury food, or the poor pittance if she reflected on the gall offered our Lord?"²

He ordered the anchoresses of Tarente to fast all the year from Holy Cross Day (September 14th) to Easter, except on Sundays, on all Ember days, all Fridays and vigils, but they were never to fast on bread and water only without leave of their confessor. No flesh-meat or lard was allowed them at any time, except in great sick-

¹ *Ancren Riwe*, p. 89.

² *Ibid.*, p. 263.

ness.¹ From Easter to Holy Rood they were allowed to eat twice a day, but they were sometimes to forego their pittance that was their collation for a day as a penance, and they are never to eat between meals; even their maids are forbidden to do this, and as "Ancren Riwele" was the rule followed by the generality of English anchoresses, it is not likely that Mr. Fosbrooke was right in saying "recluses ate and drank at all times of the best."

Many anchoresses slept on the ground, which was very often the bare earth; some were content with a stone for a pillow, others slept on straw mattresses.

Watching was one of their duties. They rose at night to pray, and Richard Poore urged them "to shake off the habit of vicious sloth in the night."

Recluses were often buried in the cells in which they had lived, and sometimes anchorites dug their own graves. The anchoresses of Tarente were ordered to scrape up the earth every day with their hands to mortify any vanity they might indulge if their hands were very white.

In 1246 St. Richard de la Wych, Bishop of Chichester, and formerly a Dominican friar, held a synod at which it was decreed "that recluses were not to admit or have any person in their dwellings of whom grave suspicion might arise. Their windows were also to be narrow and convenient; they were permitted to have communication with those persons only whose character did not admit of suspicion. The custody of the vestments of the church was not, except in cases of necessity, to be delivered to female recluses."²

¹ *Ancren Riwele*, p. 415.

² See Wilbines' *Concilia*.

CHAPTER V.

INTERIOR LIFE OF ANCHORESSES.

*Severity of the life of true Recluses—No fixed rule—
Temptations of Anchoresses — Interior Spirit—
Mother Juliana's "Revelations" — Reasons for
leaving the World.*

THE only life which a true recluse can be said to have lived at all was an interior life; the anchoress left the world and entered a living grave simply and solely that she might lead an undistracted life of prayer and union with her Heavenly Bridegroom. She was dead to the world in a more literal sense than the religious of the most strictly enclosed order, though, of course, it is quite possible that in spirit any member of a contemplative order may be as detached from earthly things, as dead to the world, as a recluse in a cell. At the same time, the recluse was certainly more cut off from human companionship than members of a community are; the recluse lived alone, ate alone, prayed alone, worshipped alone, and very often died alone.

The Carthusians and Trappists enjoy air and exercise in cloister and garden, but the recluse was a prisoner for life, a prisoner of love, or, as the Germans say, a "prisoner of Christ," in a little stuffy cell sometimes only

a few feet square, with only one small window to the outer air ; often there was no furniture of any kind in the cell unless a stone bench and a wooden pillow can be so called. It was undoubtedly a most remarkable form of asceticism, and one to which, comparatively speaking, few religious were called, and surely those few, particularly among the weaker sex, must have been endowed with very special grace to enable them to endure such deprivations.

Richard Poore told his anchoresses that an anchoress thinks she shall be most strongly tempted in the first twelve months of her anchoritic life, but he adds in his quaint language, "I say it is not so ; in the first year it is but ball-play. For in the beginning it is but courtship to draw you unto love, but as soon as He perceives that He is on a footing of affectionate familiarity with you He will now have less forbearance with you, but after the trial in the end then is the great joy as with husband and wife." ¹

In spiritual matters anchoresses were allowed more liberty than nuns ; they might say as many prayers and in such a way as they pleased.² For those who could say the Divine Office as the three sisters for whom Richard Poore wrote did, he prescribes certain rules as to the time and manner of doing it. There was in the earlier ages no fixed rule of life, either exterior or interior, for anchoresses ; each followed the advice of her confessor.

The anchoresses of Tarente were only allowed to go to

¹ *Ancren Riwe*, p. 219.

² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Holy Communion fifteen times a year, like lay brethren, as Richard Poore says.¹ Before all their Communion, they were to make a full confession, take the discipline, and forego their pittance for one day; but they were to go to confession once a week at least, and for the very least trivial fault they were to fall down in the form of a cross to the earth before their altar, and say "*mea culpa*," and confess it to the priest when they went to confession.

From the kind of faults set down in "*Ancren Riwe*" to be mentioned in confession, we are able to gather the sort of temptations to which ordinary anchoresses of that time were subject. Of these the principal are pride, ambition, presumption, hypocrisy, anger, wrath, sloth, eating or drinking too much or too little, grumbling, being of morose countenance, speaking false or idle words, idle hearing, sitting too long at the parlour window, and breaking silence.

The interior spirit which should animate the true anchoress is simply and beautifully described in the opening chapter of an old mystical book, "*The Scale of Perfection*," written specially for a recluse living as an anchoress in the Carthusian monastery of Sheen in the fourteenth century, to whom it was dedicated; but it was printed and published for people living in the world.² The book begins as follows:—"Ghostly sister in Christ: Jesus, I pray thee that in the calling to which our Lord hath called thee for His service, thou rest contented, abide constantly therein, travailling busily with all the

¹ *Ancren Riwe*, p. 387.

² *The Scale of Perfection*, by Walter Hilton.

powers of thy soul to fulfil in truth of good life the state which thou hast taken in exterior likeness and seeming. And as thou hast forsaken the world as it were a dead man, and turned to our Lord bodily in sight of men, so thou be in thy heart as it were dead to all earthly loves and fears and turned wholly to our Lord Jesus Christ. For be thou well assured that a bodily turning to God without the heart following is but a figure and likeness of virtues and not the truth in itself.”¹

In the “Revelations of Mother Juliana” of Norwich, a holy anchoress of the fifteenth century, the inner life of the true anchoress is laid bare, and we are permitted to know the secret thoughts which sustained her in her seclusion. The whole book breathes a most tender love for our Lord, often expressed in poetical, and always in very quaint, language, and though her cell was haunted by the mystery, to her inexplicable, of the existence of sin, yet a joyful note sounds through every page.

This is the keynote to her joy: “We be enclosed in the Father, and we be enclosed in the Son, and we be enclosed in the Holy Ghost; and the Father is enclosed in us, and the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Ghost is enclosed in us.”²

Thoughts such as these pierced the walls of her cell and set her soul at liberty, though her body might be enclosed with bricks and mortar; she had attained what she sought, union with God.

¹ *The Scale of Perfection*, p. 3.

² *The Revelations of Divine Love*, with Preface by Henry Collins, 1877, Richardson, p. 20.

In another place, speaking of our Lord, she says:—
 “Glad and merry and sweet is the blissful lovely appearance of our Lord to our souls, for He beheld us ever living in love-longing.”¹

Again, “In us is His homeliest home and His endless dwelling.”²

And again, “He is our clothing that for love wrappeth us and windeth us, embraceth us and all encloseth us, and hangeth about us for tender love that He may never leave us.”³

It is almost impossible to read these “Revelations” without feeling that the writer had undoubtedly a strong vocation for the anchoretic life and found happiness therein. Now we find her saying “In this willeth our Lord that we be occupied; joying in Him for He joyeth in us;”⁴ and in another place she says, “Highly ought we to rejoice that God dwelleth in our soul, and far more highly ought we to rejoice that our soul dwelleth in God.”⁵

It would seem that she forgot that she dwelt enclosed bodily in a cell as a church anchoress, and remembered only that in spirit she lived enclosed in God; nor was she alone, for in her, as she so quaintly says, was “His homeliest home.”

Richard Poore gives eight reasons for retiring from the world and living enclosed in a cell. These are:—
 “1, Security; 2, virginity; 3, to obtain heaven; 4, it is a proof of nobleness and liberality; 5, noblemen and

¹ *Revelations of Divine Love*, p. 266.

² *Ibid.*, p. 255.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

women give large alms, we have left all and followed Thee; 6, to be in fellowship with our Lord; 7, to be the brighter and to behold more clearly God's countenance in heaven; 8, that their prayers may be fervent." ¹

The true anchoress, having retired from the world and the society of her fellow-creatures in order to live an undistracted life of prayer and union with Almighty God, looked upon visitors as St. Colette did, as a real trial, because they interrupted her communion with her Heavenly Bridegroom.

Many no doubt needed to be reminded of the reason for which they had become recluses, for the author of "*Ancren Riwe*" tells his anchoresses, "After the kiss of peace in the Mass when the priest consecrates, forget then all the world and then be entirely out of the body, then in glowing love embrace your beloved Saviour who is come down from heaven into your breast's bower, and hold Him fast until He shall have granted what you wish for." But though there may have been anchoresses who fell short of the standard this writer proposes to his anchoresses, we are quite sure that the picture drawn by a celebrated Protestant author, of an anchoress sitting in an oak chair over a fire with a cat by her side, is incorrect. Very few recluses had chairs at all; a stone bench sufficed as a seat, and the greater number spent their days and part of their nights in prayer, mortification, and manual labour, not in petting cats and sitting dreaming in a comfortable chair over a fire, which indeed few of them were allowed.

¹ *Ancren Riwe*, p. 35.

CHAPTER VI.

CEREMONY OF ENCLOSING ANCHORITES.

THE ceremony of enclosing anchoresses varied but little from that of enclosing anchorites. In the office for the latter, from Bishop Lacy's "Pontifical," the rubrics were as follows (translated):—¹

At the enclosing of an anchorite, if a man and a cleric, let him prostrate himself in the middle of the choir in prayer, with his feet bare; if he is a layman, let him lie outside the gate of the choir; if it is a woman, let her lie in the western part of the church, where it is customary for the women to worship.

The bishop, or some other to whom he has committed the office, being vested in the sacred vestments, except the chasuble, the assistant clergy being already vested, seats himself in the presbytery or sacristy while the cantor begins the responsory.

Here follow Psalms 6, 8, 19, 31, 34, 37, 40, 42, 50, 101, 103, 129, 130, 142, and then the Litany.

At the end of the Litany let the bishop with the other clergy come to the prostrate person with cross, thurible, and holy water, and the cross being placed

¹Translated from the Latin of Bishop Lacy's "Pontifical" from the office "Reclusio Anchoritarum."

before him or her, let him sprinkle him three times with holy water and cense him in like manner.

Then follow certain versicles and collects. Then the bishop or his substitute, with some other venerable person, raise the prostrate anchorite, giving into his hands two lighted wax candles, showing that he shall henceforth abide in the fervent love of God and his neighbour. Holding a candle in each hand he shall listen devoutly to the sub-deacon reading in a loud voice this lesson from Isaiah, the prophet, chapter xxvi., verse 20, "Go, my people, enter into thy chamber, shut thy doors upon thee, hide thyself a little, for a moment, until the indignation pass away."

This being read is to be followed by the deacon reading the Gospel according to St. Luke, as in the Mass for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary:—

"At that time Jesus entered into a certain town, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house; and she had a sister called Mary, who, sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving, and she stood and said, Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering, said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art solicitous and troubled about many things. Now one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." Which being finished, let the vestments be blessed. Two collects follow.

The blessing and sprinkling of the habit with holy water being finished, let the person about to be enclosed read his profession before the altar-step, and leave it upon the altar, whence, being dismissed and having kissed the altar, let him go back to the step, and then, kneeling, let him say this verse three times, "Receive me, O Lord! according to thy word."

After this has been said three times, the choir responding, let him straightway offer and place wax candles on the candelabra and go back to the step. Then let him kneel while the bishop clothes him in his new clothes, now blessed, his old having been removed, saying, "The Lord put off from thee the old man with his deeds. Amen. The Lord clothe thee with the new man, which according to God is made in justice and true holiness."

This being said, the bishop begins the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, then follows the *Pater Noster*, some versicles, and a collect.

These finished, let the bishop preach a sermon to the people, explaining the manner and rule of life of an enclosed person, and let him commend the person about to be enclosed to the people that they may pray for him, which being done, if the person about to be enclosed is a priest, let him say the Mass of the Holy Spirit, if he is not a priest, let the bishop, if he wishes, or some other priest, say that Mass. Mass being said, let the bishop lead the recluse by the hand to the cell, and let the cantor begin the antiphon, "I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle," from Psalm 41.

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When he has sung this, let him go personally to the door of the cell, which, when he has arrived, let the bishop enter with the clergy, the others, with the person about to be enclosed, in the meanwhile remaining outside waiting, and presently the bishop sprinkling the house with holy water and beginning the antiphon "Sprinkle me with hyssop." Then let him say some versicles, Psalms 140 and 147 and a collect, then a prayer beginning "I will bless the house."

These finished, let the bishop go out with the others, and let him speak to the person about to be enclosed, and say, "If he wishes to enter, let him enter." But when he has entered let him be censed and sprinkled with holy water; then shall be said "In Paradisum." "May the angels lead thee into Paradise; may the martyrs receive thee in thy coming; may they lead thee into the holy city, Jerusalem."

Then shall be said Psalm 113 and this responsory. The kingdom of this world and all the advantages of the world I despise on account of the love of my Jesus Whom I have seen, Whom I loved, in Whom I believed, Whom I have chosen.

Then follows the verse, "My heart hath uttered a good word," Psalm xlv. verse 1.

Then follows the blessing and a prayer.

Then the bishop sprinkles the whole house and afterwards censes it, and then let him perform the office of Extreme Unction, beginning the prayers and the antiphon, and the choir having sung the same antiphon outside, let him say over the prostrate recluse, "I

commend thy soul until the placing of the body on the bier that death being anticipated thou mayst not be wanting in this holy service." Which being done, let the grave be opened, entering which let the recluse himself or another in his name sing, "This is my rest for ever and ever," the choir outside singing the antiphons "Here will I dwell for I have chosen it," from Psalm 131.

Then the bishop, sprinkling a little dust over him, begins the antiphon "From dust wast thou created," the choir singing the psalm as above, and thus singing let them all go out, the bishop only remaining a little while, instructing the recluse that he should out of obedience and in obedience fulfil what remains of life.

And the bishop having gone out, let them build up the entrance of the house, and the psalm being finished with antiphons and prayers in the name of the Holy Trinity let them all depart in peace.

Nevertheless many prelates then say the office of Extreme Unction and of commendation, and having finished the collect "Hear, O Lord, our prayers," they build up the gate of the house and enter the church singing the antiphon of Blessed Mary or of the local saint with the collect, and thus they conclude the office.

A description¹ is given by Gregory of Tours of the ceremony of enclosing an anchoress, which took place in the monastery of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, in the time of St. Radegonde, the holy queen of France, who six years after her marriage to King Clotaire, who converted her from Paganism to Christianity, became a nun

¹ *Hist. Franc.*, pp. 6, 29.

and lived a most ascetic life.¹ This enclosure took place probably in the second half of the sixth century, as St. Radegonde lived from 519 to 587.

After the cell in the cloister had been prepared for her reception, St. Radegonde led the nun who had offered herself as a recluse to the place, whither all the nuns accompanied them, carrying wax tapers and singing psalms.

At the cell the recluse took leave of all, kissed each one separately, and then stepped through the entrance, which was walled up behind her.²

It is also recorded by this Gregory of Tours that even children aspired to the anchoritic life, and he mentions a boy of twelve years of age, named Anatolius, who shut himself up in a building at Bordeaux in a niche so small that a man could not stand upright in it.³

In Grimlaic's rule for solitaries it was ordered that the recluse should, after having served a strict novitiate, take the vows before the bishop and the assembled clergy, and then while the church bells were rung, he should proceed to the prepared cell wearing the habit which he would for the future always wear, and the bishop would then seal up the door of the cell with his ring. If he was a priest, his oratory was to be consecrated by the bishop, so that he might say Mass there daily.

¹ Dr. Brewer's *Reader's Handbook*, p. 811.

² *Kirchen Lexikon*, Wetzer and Welte (Freiburg in Breslau), 1889, Vol. VI., p. 634.

³ *Ibid.*

The habit prescribed in this rule is the same as that of the Benedictines, on whose rule this is founded ; but in winter the recluse received a sheepskin cloak as a protection against the cold.¹

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon*, Wetzer and Welte, p. 635.

CHAPTER VII.

EASTERN ANCHORESSES.

St. Thais — Paesia — St. Mary — B.B. Marana and Cyra — St. Pelagia — Melania — Alexandra — St. Syncletica — St. Vèrène — St. Azella — St. Sara — St. Pansemne — St. Euphrosyne — St. Domnine.

ST. THAIS (*d.* 348 A.D.).

ALTHOUGH anchoresses are considered to be the descendants of St. Thais and other solitaries of the Nile desert,¹ yet St. Thais was not, strictly speaking, an anchoress, but a penitent who submitted to being enclosed in a cell as a penance for her sins, whereas true anchoresses, as we have seen, were women who left the world to be "hid with Christ."

St. Thais, however, is the earliest instance on record of a woman being immured in a cell attached to a monastery. She lived in the fourth century, and died about 348 A.D. She was a beautiful Egyptian, famous alike for her beauty and her wickedness. She was converted by a holy anchorite of Thebais named Paphnuthius, who, having heard of her, left his cell to seek this

¹ Essay on *Spiritual Life of Mediæval England*, by Father Dalgairns, p. 7.

lost sheep. He succeeded in convincing her of the wickedness of the life she was leading, and took her to a convent of nuns, where he shut her up in a cell and sealed the door, and ordered the nuns to bring her bread and water every day.¹

It is said that when she asked him how she was to pray he said, "You are not worthy to utter the name of God or the Holy Trinity; turn to the east and say, 'Thou who hast created me, have pity on me.'"

For three years St. Thais lived thus on bread and water enclosed in this cell, and then Paphnutius, after consulting with St. Antony and Paul the Simple, decided that she might be permitted to live with the other nuns, so she was released, but she only lived about a fortnight afterwards.

So far as the exterior life is concerned, she is undoubtedly the earliest instance on record of a woman living an anchoritic life; but the spirit which animated her was contrition for her sins and a desire to expiate them by penance, whereas anchoresses were moved to immure themselves in a cell in order to be alone with God and to live a life of uninterrupted union with Him.

PAESIA (*4th Century*).

Another penitent lived an anchoritic life in the desert of Scete, who, though not canonised, became a very holy woman. Her name was Paesia. She was a charitable and devout young woman, but she fell into poverty, and

¹ Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

at the same time into grievous sin. This came to the ears of the monks of the desert, among whom was then living St. John the Dwarf, a most holy recluse; the other monks entreated St. John to try and reclaim this Paesia. Accordingly he went to her house, and, after some difficulty, obtained admittance, and reasoned with her and eventually converted her. She asked him "if the gate of penitence was still open to her," and being assured that it was, told St. John to take her where he pleased. She then left her house at once, without giving any orders, and spent the rest of her life in seclusion in the desert of Scete, practising great austerities and dying a happy death not long after in the wilderness, where the ground was her bed¹ and a hillock her pillow, at the end of the fourth century.

ST. MARY, NIECE OF ST. ABRAHAM.

The story of this recluse is very remarkable. She, too, was a penitent, but had attained eminence for her life of piety and penance before her lapse into mortal sin. On the death of her father she was left to the care of her uncle, St. Abraham, then a hermit living walled up in a cell two miles from Edessa, whither he retired with the consent of his bride immediately after his wedding feast. He was both rich and of noble birth, but he left everything to become an anchorite, and for fifty years lived in this cell.

When he became guardian to his niece he placed her in a cell near his own, and instructed her in the religious

¹ Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, Vol. IX., p. 192.

life, but unfortunately a wicked monk, under pretence of consulting St. Abraham, became acquainted with his niece and led her into grievous sin. In despair she left her cell and went to a distant town, where she gave herself up to a life of immorality.

For two years St. Abraham wept and prayed constantly for her, and then learning where she was he disguised himself and sought her; when he had found her he revealed himself to her and converted her. He then set her on his horse and led her back to a cell behind his own, where she lived for fifteen years in perfect penance.

Three years after her conversion she worked miracles. She survived her uncle for five years, and after her death St. Ephrem, another holy anchorite, a great friend of St. Abraham's, testified that her face appeared shining.¹

B.B. MARANA AND CYRA (*d.* 5th Century).

Although, outwardly, the lives of B.B. Marana and Cyra were less like those of a church anchoress of the middle ages than that of St. Thais, yet, inwardly, they were more akin to true anchoresses, for they left the world to be united with God, and lived in one continued ecstasy of prayer.²

They were two friends, daughters of rich noble families living at Berea, in Syria, in the fifth century, an account of whom is given by Theodoret in his

¹ Abridged from Butler.

² *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, translated from the German of Countess Hahn-Hahn, 1847, Richardson & Son.

"Lives of the Saints." They made a vow of virginity and retired to a garden outside Berea given them by Cyra's father. Here they had a little hut built for them without any roof; it was simply a wall built round a small open space technically called a "mandra," from the Latin "mandra," a hovel or lodge for cattle. This afforded them no shelter from sun or rain or storms, or from the reptiles and insects of that hot country.

The entrance to this "mandra," which served them for cell and oratory, was built up; there were two small windows in the wall, one of which looked into the garden, and the other into a monastery, against which one side of the wall was built; there were shutters to both these windows. Their scanty supply of food, which consisted of bread and water, was passed through the window which opened into the garden.

Like the later anchoresses, Marana and Cyra had servants, who lived in a cloister adjoining the "mandra," and were occupied in manual labour and in receiving spiritual instruction through the window from their mistresses.

These two holy anchoresses, if such they may be called, wore heavy iron chains round their necks and waists and feet, one end of which reached to the ground, which so weighed them down that Cyra, who was very delicate, could scarcely stand, yet she was always absorbed in holy contemplation, and no stranger ever heard her speak. They wore long veils, reaching to the ground behind and to their waists in front.¹

¹ *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

At Pentecost Marana spoke to women who sought her advice at her window, but at no other season, and all the rest of the year she maintained silence. She selected the time of Pentecost to give these audiences that the Holy Ghost might teach her what to say.

Three times a year they fasted for forty days, and three times a year they fasted for twenty-one days. Twice only during the forty-two years they lived in this "mandra" did they leave it; once to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a journey of twenty days, which they performed fasting, and once to visit the tomb of St. Thecla at Seleucia, in Isauria. They were visited by Theodoret, who afterwards wrote their lives.¹

ST. PELAGIA (5th Century).

The story of St. Pelagia is one of those true histories which are stranger than fiction. About the middle of the fifth century the principal singer and dancer of the theatre in the city of Antioch was a very beautiful heathen girl named Pelagia. One day she happened to hear the bishop, whose name was Nonnus, preach, and was there and then converted and baptised, and so great was the grace vouchsafed her that after her baptism she gave all her jewels and all her riches to the poor, she gave her slaves their freedom, and then with the consent of Nonnus retired to a cell on Mount Olivet, where she passed the rest of her life.²

At this time a great many anchorites were living in caverns and cells on Mount Olivet, in the valley of

¹ *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

² *Ibid.*

Josaphat, and among them was one young anchorite, who, although of slight build and delicate and refined appearance, was distinguished for the great austerities he practised. He lived in a cavern with a hole in the door to admit light and air, and he only went out once a week to fetch water and gather some herbs for his food. He had a beautiful voice, and the other anchorites often heard him singing psalms and hymns in his cell. He was visited twice by James, the deacon of Edessa, but on his second visit Brother Pelagius was found dead in his cell, and it was then discovered that he was no other than Pelagia, who, with the consent of Bishop Nonnus, had assumed man's clothing over a hair shirt and adopted the life of the anchorites. She was afterwards canonised.¹

MELANIA (410-439).

There were two very holy women named Melania living in Rome at the beginning of the fifth century; the younger of these may be called an anchoress, as she lived for fourteen years shut up in a solitary cell on Mount Olivet. She was the grand-daughter of the elder Melania, and married, when quite young, a young Roman of noble birth named Pinian, and lived in Rome, where they showed great hospitality to strangers, especially to bishops and priests.

They had two children, both of whom died in infancy when Pinian was about twenty-four and Melania only twenty. After the deaths of these children they began

¹ *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.*

to lead a life of austerity. They ate only every other day; Melania served her own servants, and, making her costly garments into Church vestments, dressed with great simplicity. She sold her diamonds and other jewels, and sent the proceeds to the hermits of the East and to monasteries.

They had property in England, France and Spain, which later on they sold for the benefit of the poor, but they kept their estates in the Campania, Sicily, and Africa that they might have means to fall back upon for further charitable works.

They then went with the elder Melania to Tagaste, in Africa, where they lived a holy life, and from whence they all three made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to the Syrian monks and solitaries of the desert. At Jerusalem Pinian founded a monastery for monks, and Melania a convent for nuns, but retired herself to a solitary cell on Mount Olivet, where she lived for fourteen years. She left it at the end of that time to go to Constantinople to visit her uncle Volusian, who was ambassador to the Emperor Theodosius II. She converted him and then returned to her cell for four more years, and eventually died on December 31st, 439, in her convent at Jerusalem.

She wore a habit of sackcloth in her cell; her bed was a straw mat; she ate only every fifth day, and then her food was only bread and water; her cell contained no furniture.

When at Constantinople she obtained great influence over the Empress Eudocia, and induced her to make a

pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where the elder Melania met her.

ALEXANDRA (5th Century).

Another holy recluse, a contemporary of the Melanias, was Alexandra, who for ten years was enclosed in a sepulchral cavern near the city of Alexandria, during which time no one saw her face.

She spent the greater part of the day in prayer and meditation, and most of the night in reciting psalms; she did a little needlework in the morning between her prayers and the psalms she sang; after none she spent the rest of the day in meditating on the lives of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs. She did not eat till the evening, when her food was bread and water.

Melania the elder visited her and asked her how she could lead such a life, to which she replied "I cannot explain it any more than thou canst." She then told her how she spent her days, and added, "Thus time flies, and full of confidence I await my last hour that will deliver and present me before my Saviour's face."¹

Melania then asked her why she did it, and Alexandra answered, "A young man loved me with an inordinate affection. I choose therefore to shut myself up alive in the grave rather than afflict and disturb a soul that was created after the image of God."²

She was found dead in her cell by the person who

¹ *Fathers of the Desert*, p. 479.

² *Ibid.*, p. 480.

took her her food, lying in the attitude of a corpse prepared for burial, having foreseen the hour of her death.

ST. SYNCLETICA (*4th Century*).

St. Syncletica was born in Alexandria of Macedonian parents; the exact date is uncertain, but Butler says she could not have lived later than the fourth century. She had many admirers who sought her in marriage, but she consecrated herself to God from her youth. At the death of her parents, whose heiress she was, she became very rich, but she quickly gave away the whole of her fortune to the poor, and, taking with her a blind sister who had been left in her charge, she retired to a lonely monument on the estate of a relation, and, shut up in this place, she lived a life of prayer and great mortification. She was often visited by women who came to ask her advice on spiritual matters. She lived to be eighty-four, but suffered from cancer during her last years, and bore her sufferings with heroic patience, and was consoled by visions.

Richard Poore, in his "*Ancren Riwe*," mentions St. Syncletica as one of St. James's order of anchorites.¹

ST. VÉRÈNE (A.D. 300).

It is considered probable that St. Vérène was an Egyptian. She was related to St. Victor of Thebes, martyr, who was her guardian, and travelled with him into Europe, and retired into the Swiss mountains to live in a cave. She passed the last years of her life in

¹ *Ancren Riwe*, p. 11.

a cell which a holy priest had built for her, and died there about the year 300. She is much venerated in Switzerland, and a great many parishes there have chosen her as their patron saint. Her cell, which is about a mile and a half from Solesmes, is a favourite place of pilgrimage. Her relics were given to Rudolph, Archduke of Austria, who had them carried to Vienna and placed in the church of St. Stephen.¹

ST. AZELLA (A.D. 334).

This saint, born in 334, was a contemporary of St. Jerome, and though not, strictly speaking, a recluse, since she sometimes left her cell to visit the poor and the churches and martyrs' tombs in the city of Rome, where she lived, yet from her twelfth year she led a life of strict seclusion, forsaking the world and refusing to receive the visits of her own sister, who still led a life of pleasure like the rest of the Roman ladies in her position. Azella was dedicated by her parents from her birth to God, in obedience to a vision. She was of delicate constitution, but nevertheless practised great austerities. Her food was only bread and salt and cold water; she wore a hair shirt and the coarsest clothing, and spent a great part of her time in reading and studying Holy Scripture and in visiting the poor, whom she served with her own hands.

She appears to have been a friend of St. Jerome, who had a very high opinion of her ability and strength of mind, and called her the ornament of virginity. When

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 1232.

he was forced by his enemies to leave Rome, he confided to Azella in a letter his reasons for going away. We are told that though pale and emaciated from her life of severe penance, she was always cheerful. Not long before her death, which occurred in 406, several other virgins placed themselves under her guidance, perhaps with an idea of forming a community, but she died soon after.¹

ST. SARA.²

St. Sara lived for sixty years as a solitary in the desert of Scete, once so famous for the number of anchorites who inhabited it. Her cell was near the river, but she led such a mortified life that it is said she never once saw its banks, preferring to deny herself even that innocent pleasure. She suffered much from diabolical temptations, but for thirteen years she resisted them, and never once prayed that they might be removed, but only that God would give her strength to resist them. When finally they ceased the devil tempted her to pride, and appearing to her said, "Sara, I yield, I confess you have conquered me," but she answered meekly, "No; it is not I that have conquered, but our Lord Jesus Christ."

On one occasion two aged solitaries who wished to see if her virtues equalled her reputation visited her and

¹See *The Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, translated from the French (Thomas Richardson & Son), 1847, pp. 92-93; and Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 271.

²See *The Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, translated from the French (Thomas Richardson & Son), 1847, p. 23.

told her that "they saw her heart was full of vanity, and that she deluded herself with the belief that because she was a woman solitaires came to consult her." The saint replied very sensibly "that if she desired men to be edified by her example she should not remain in the desert, but rather let the door of every house bear witness to her penance and contrition." She added "that she preferred praying to God for mankind, and by so doing preserved her heart in purity."

The author of "*Ancren Riwe*" quotes St. Sara as an example in his work.¹

ST. PANSEMNE.

St. Pansemne lived at Antioch, and for several years led a very wicked life in that city, when she was converted by St. Theophane the Recluse, so called from his mode of life. By his advice she followed his example, and caused herself to be walled up in a cell, where she practised the severest penance and died a holy death fourteen months after her conversion.²

ST. EUPHROSYNE (A.D. 470).

St. Euphrosyne was an Egyptian, and lived at Alexandria, where she was born about the year 415. Her father was a man of position and influence named Paphnutius, but he refused to allow her to embrace the religious life, though from her earliest youth she desired to consecrate herself to Christ. When she was nearly

¹ *Ancren Riwe*, p. 236.

² Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 633.

eighteen she disguised herself as a man, and ran away from her father's house to a monastery near Alexandria, where she begged the abbot to admit her. He, seeing her innocence, the motive of her conduct, and the piety of her intentions, shut her up in a cell apart from the monks, and placed her under the direction of a wise priest. Here she remained, dividing her time between prayer, mortification, manual labour, and the services of the religious life. Her own father, who was in the habit of visiting the monastery, had several interviews with her without recognising her, and only on her death-bed did she tell him who she was. He was so moved by her example that he too left the world, and, after her death, retired into the cell she had lived in for thirty-eight years. St. Euphrosyne died about the year 470; her relics were transported from Egypt to Beaulieu, near Compiègne, in France.¹

ST. DOMNINE (*5th Century*).

St. Domnine lived at the beginning of the fifth century in Syria. When she was quite young, the example of St. Maron, an anchorite, inspired her with the desire to imitate his life, so she built a little cabin for herself in her mother's garden, and here passed her days and nights, only going out night and morning to the church, which was close by.

Her only food was lentils soaked in water, which made her so thin that she became mere skin and bone. She never looked at any visitors, or allowed them to see her

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 928.

face, but bent her body so that her face was hidden. She had the gift of tears to such an extent that she is said to have wept continually. She was often visited by Theodoret, who relates that she would frequently cover his hand with her tears.

Although she passed her time in contemplation, she did not forget exterior works of charity, such as assisting other solitaires and seeing that her mother and brothers exercised hospitality to the strangers who visited her. Her example was followed by many others.¹

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 1411.

CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY ENGLISH ANCHORESSES.

*St. Keyna—St. Ninnoc—St. Breaca—St. Bees—St. Pega—
—St. Etheldritha—St. Withburge—St. Withburge
II.—St. Tibba—St. Frideswitha—St. Mechtilde—
St. Lucy of Scotland—Salome and Judith.*

IN the early centuries of the Christian era the anchoritic life in this country and in Ireland was rarer than in the middle ages. We have about a dozen canonised anchoresses in Great Britain between the fifth and eleventh centuries; in Ireland rather more than twelve. In early times it often happened that when a recluse retired to a cell, others gathered round her, and her cell became the nucleus of a monastery, of which she frequently was chosen the superior, and left the solitary life to accept the post of abbess. The church anchoress was, strictly speaking, a later development of the solitary life. The early anchoresses frequently lived in caves or in solitary cells in woods or lonely retired spots; often a church was afterwards built on the same spot, whereas in later times the church was built first and the recluse's cell added when required.

It was generally women of means and position, sometimes even of royal birth, who embraced this life, devot-

ing their fortunes either to the foundation of monasteries and churches or to the poor.

ST. KEYNA, V. (*5th or 6th Century*).¹

St. Keyna is much venerated in Wales, and was the daughter of St. Braganus or Brecon, prince of Brecon, and aunt to St. David, whose mother was her sister Melaria.² She was a recluse in the fifth or sixth century, for the date of her death is unknown. She lived in a wood in Somersetshire, near Keynsham, a small town, probably named after her, on the Avon. She was sur-named the Virgin by the Welsh.

There is a place in Cornwall called St. Keyne, which is probably so named in honour of this saint, who after leaving Somersetshire, where she is said to have destroyed the serpents that abounded there by her prayers, retired to Mount St. Michael, where there is a well called St. Keyne's Well, said to have sprung forth at her prayers. Her family gave several saints to the Church. One of her sisters, St. Ninnoc, also led an anchoritic life.

ST. NINNOC (*5th Century*).³

St. Ninnoc was the youngest of this family of saints. Her father was Brecon, prince of Brecon, and she lived in the latter part of the fifth century. She was piously brought up by her parents, and from her early

¹ From Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

² *The Reader's Handbook*, by Dr. Brewer, p. 510.

³ *Menology of England and Wales*, by Richard Stanton (Burns and Oates), 1887, p. 253.

youth she, with their consent, began to lead a solitary life in Cornwall. It is not known where her cell was. Afterwards she went to Brittany with other devout men and women, and settled in the province of Cornouailles, where Ninnoc, with the consent of the prince of the province, founded a monastery. She lived in this spot for thirty-eight years, practising great austerities, and leaving behind her a reputation for holiness which spread to other countries. She used to be invoked in the old English Litanies. She was a sister of the above solitary, St. Keyna.

ST. BREACA (*6th Century*).¹

St. Breaca was placed under the guidance of St. Bridget of Kildare in her youth, who built for her a little hermitage and an oratory, where she lived as a solitary for some time. St. Bridget afterwards took her from this retreat to make her the abbess of a convent she had built in a place known as the field of St. Breaca. Later she went to Cornwall, where she built two churches. She died in the middle of the sixth century.

ST. BEES OR BEGA (*7th Century*).²

St. Bees or Bega, from whom the village and promontory of St. Bees, in Cumberland, are named, lived an anchoritic life in the middle of the seventh century. She afterwards founded a nunnery at Copeland, near Carlisle, another at a place called by Butler Heorthu,

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 480.

² Butler, Vol. IX., p. 84.

probably Heworth, in the county of Durham, and a third at Hartlepool, in the same county.

After she left Hartlepool she is said to have built a cell for herself at a place then called Calcaria, supposed by Camden to be the present Tadcaster, in Yorkshire, but it is uncertain whether she died there or in another monastery three miles from Scarborough. Some confusion exists between her and the Irish saint of the same name. The Bollandists believe them to be the same person;¹ Butler, on the contrary, thinks there were two saints named Bega.

ST. PEGA (*d.* 719).²

St. Pega was the daughter of an Anglo-Saxon nobleman, and sister to Guthlac, the celebrated hermit of Croyland, an isle in the Fens of Lincolnshire, where afterwards one of our most celebrated English abbeys, whose ruins still exist, was built. St. Pega lived about twelve miles from Croyland, at a place in Northamptonshire now called Peakirk after her. In those days there were several recluses living in cottages in the Isle of Croyland, near the oratory of St. Guthlac, round whom they had gathered for the benefit of his counsel.³

St. Pega's cell was about twelve miles from Croyland, and was built on a piece of high ground near the present village of Peakirk. When St. Guthlac was dying he

¹ Stanton's *Menology*, p. 520.

² See Ingulph's *Chronicle of Croyland Abbey*, translated by Henry Riley (Bell & Son), 1893, p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*

sent for his sister to go and visit him.¹ A year after his death, when Kennulph was abbot of Croyland, St. Pega left with him the scourge of St. Bartholomew and her brother's psalter, and returned by boat to her cell, where she remained mourning his loss for two years and three months and then "travelled to Rome suffering greatly from cold and hunger."² Here she lived a very austere life for two or three years, and died in 719, five years after St. Guthlac.

ST. ETHELDRITHA (*d.* 834).

It was to a small cell near Croyland that nearly a century later another Anglo-Saxon saint retired to lead the life of a recluse. This was the Princess Etheldritha or Alfrida, daughter of Offa, King of the Mercians and of Queen Quindreda. She refused to marry Ethelbert, King of the East Anglians, the holy martyr, who was murdered by her parents while on a visit to their house, and filled with horror at the crime, she left the court to shut herself up in a cell near Croyland, where she lived for forty years according to the account of her in Fr. Stanton's "Menology." Ingulph in his "Chronicle of Croyland Abbey," however, says she was "the wife of the holy martyr Ethelbert, but at this period in her love for Christ her spouse was living as a recluse in one part of a cell situated on the south side of the church of Croyland, over against the great altar."³ While she was so living, a

¹ Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, Vol. IV., p. 145.

² Ingulph's *Chronicle of Croyland Abbey*, p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

kinsman of hers, Wichtlaf, duke of the people of Worcester, was made king, but he was pursued by the generals of Egbert, and Etheldritha hid him for four months in her cell.

In a charter Wichtlaf afterwards granted to the Abbey of Croyland, he speaks of her as his kinswoman, "a most holy virgin who in her love for her Spouse, the Lamb without blemish, is a recluse at Croyland."¹

She died about A.D. 834, and is reported to have worked several miracles.²

ST. WITHBURGE (*d.* 743).

St. Withburge was for a short time another royal recluse. She was the youngest of the four daughters, all of whom were canonised saints of the holy King of the East Anglians named Annas.³ St. Withburge lived for several years in solitude at Holkham, a village on the coast of Norfolk, which country used to be called the Holy Land of England, because it was in those days so rich in shrines and monasteries.

A church was built on the spot where St. Withburge lived and called Withburgstowe after her. She left Holkham after some years, and moved to East Dereham, then an obscure village, now a flourishing market-town, with a most interesting and fine old church. She was joined at Dereham by other devout virgins, and laid the foundations of a church and convent, but she died in 743 before they were finished.

¹ Ingulph's *Chronicle of Croyland Abbey*, p. 16.

² Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII., p. 105.

Her body was moved into the church fifty-five years after her death, and in 1106 it was again moved to Ely, and found still incorrupt; she was then buried near her sisters SS. Sexburga, Ermenilda, and Etheldreda or Audry.¹ In the spot where St. Withburge was first buried in the churchyard at East Dereham, a well of clear water, formerly very famous for cures, still exists, and is called St. Withburge's well.

ST. WITHBURGE II. (*d.* 755).²

Another saint of this name was also a recluse and a contemporary of the above St. Withburga. She belonged to the family of one of the Kings of Kent, and is said to have been brought up with him and to have had the same mother. She made a pilgrimage to Rome in the time of Pope Stephen. She had long desired to see Rome; and then finished her life holily and died as a recluse near St. Peter's, in 755. This Pope spoke of recluses as people who from their youth had shut themselves up for the love of God. This recluse is mentioned in a letter to St. Boniface of Mayence, but as there is no evidence of her cultus, though she is described as very celebrated, the Bollandists pass her over.

TIBBA (*8th Century*).³

St. Tibba was a relation of SS. Kyneburge and Kyneswide, daughters of Penda, King of Mercia. She lived

¹ Butler, Vol. VII., p. 105.

² *Boll.*, Oct. VII., p. 794; and Migne, Vol. II., p. 1203.

³ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 1178.

in the eighth century. Disgusted with the pleasures of this world, she left the court and fled to a lonely spot, where she passed the remainder of her life in prayer and penance. She was honoured as a saint after her death in this country, particularly in the county of Rutland, at Rihal, on the river Wash.¹

ST. FRIDESWITHA (*8th Century*).

Before the Protestant Reformation this saint was honoured at Oxford as patroness of the town and of the university. She was the daughter of Didan of Oxford, probably a little king, called by Migne a prince of Oxford, a devout Catholic, who, in 750, formed a convent at Oxford in honour of the Blessed Virgin and all the saints, of which his daughter became the superioress. From her early youth she was remarkable for her piety, and she had the advantage of being educated by a holy woman named Algiva, who taught her to despise the world and earthly riches so that Frideswitha consecrated herself to God and embraced the religious life.²

Algar, prince of Mercia, fell violently in love with her, and, in spite of her being a nun, resolved to carry her off by force. Frideswitha, however, was warned of her danger, and, to escape it, concealed herself for three years in a cave near Abingdon; Butler says in a pigsty for a long time. It is said that her admirer became blind as a punishment for his wickedness, but that through her prayers and on his repentance his sight was restored.

¹ Butler.

² Migne, Vol. I., p. 1108.

She then moved to Binsey, nearer Oxford, where it is said a miraculous spring broke out in answer to her prayers. Pilgrimages were frequent in later times to a chapel built there in her honour. Frideswitha had a little oratory built for her at Thornbury, near Oxford, and there shut herself up and devoted her time entirely to prayer and contemplation, though nominally she was abbess of a convent built by her father in Oxford. She died at the end of the eighth century, and after her death the church in which she was buried was called after her.

In the reign of Elizabeth her remains were profaned, and the wife of Martin Bucer buried in her tomb.¹

B. MECHTILDE (A.D. 1205).²

Mechtilde was a Scotch recluse who lived at the end of the twelfth century. She left Scotland secretly with her younger brother, and went to France on a pilgrimage, and lived as a solitary enclosed in a Cistercian monastery in La Thierarche. She died there in 1205, and is honoured at Foigny, in Picardy, and is much praised by the Dominican Thomas à Cantimpré. She lived in great austerity.

ST. LUCY OF SCOTLAND (11th Century).³

This saint was a princess, a daughter of one of the kings of the Scots, and lived in the eleventh century.

¹ Migne, Vol. I., p. 1108; Stanton's *Menology*; Butler.

² Migne, Vol. II., p. 472; and *Boll.*, Feb. III., p. 624.

³ Migne, Vol. II., p. 313.

To escape from the immorality of her father's court, she secretly left the country about 1050 and went to Lorraine, where, on the banks of the Meuse, she sought some place of retreat in which she could serve God secure from the dangers of the world.

When she reached the town of Sampigny she fixed upon a mountain in the neighbourhood as her resting-place at night, and engaged herself to a rich man named Thiebaut as his shepherdess. He made her his heiress, and when he died she employed the money he left her in building on the mountain a church which still is called after her, and by its side she built a hermitage for herself. Close by was a grotto into which she used to retire at night to pray.

Her holy life and her austerities excited admiration, and before, as well as after, her death, God gave her grace to work miracles. She was buried in the church, now the Parish Church of Sampigny, which she built.

Her relics were removed from her grave and placed in a shrine by Henry of Blois, brother of King Stephen of England, and still attract a great number of pilgrims. She is specially invoked by childless women who desire to become mothers.

SALOME AND JUDITH (*9th Century*).¹

Salome was a niece of the King of England, who had a very great affection for her, and adopted her as his daughter. She was very beautiful, but the beauty of her interior virtues surpassed her natural beauty. Two

¹ *Boll.*, Jun. VII., pp. 451-456.

chosen maidens from her father's household went with her to the king's palace and helped her in the distribution of alms, which she gave largely, not only as befitted her high rank, but also secretly.

With these girls she consulted as to how she could leave the world and her country, and live in a quieter place than the court, apart from its pomps and vanities, which were hateful to her. She hid her intention of forsaking the court with its balls and other festivities with great discretion from every one else. As she grew up she desired to give herself entirely to Christ, Whose sweetness she felt more and more, and communicated her desire to these two companions, whom she inspired with a similar love for our Lord.

She had a friend in the city, a certain nun, who helped her in her secret purpose by providing suitable clothes for the journey for herself and her handmaidens, and when they finally decided to start they left their sumptuous court-apparel with this nun, and received from her instead what is described as poor and humble clothing, which would disguise Salome's rank and also be a protection to them on their journey, and thus habited the princess and her ladies-in-waiting set forth stealthily.

They made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and on their way home, to avoid meeting any acquaintances, and to visit the shrine of St. Egidius, they went through Bavaria. On this journey Salome's companions died, and she, a king's daughter, was left alone, poor and a stranger, in a foreign land. When she reached Ratisbon a young

officer, a Count Wissena by name, saw her and fell in love with her, and asked her to marry him. She refused, and to escape from him she prayed to God to disfigure her, and shortly after she became blind.

One day when wandering by the shores of the Danube (how she got there her biographer does not know), she fell over a precipice into the river, and was rescued by two fishermen who were passing in a small rowing-boat; they restored her respiration after much difficulty, and in a barbarous way. She was then afflicted with leprosy, but before it appeared openly she arrived at Altaich, where she was supported for some time by the alms of the faithful.

One day she entered the house of a certain woman named Halka, and, being blind, struck her foot against the dog's kennel and fell down, and was with difficulty rescued, by the mistress's commands, from the dog, who attacked her. Halka had compassion on her, and took her into her house and kept her there for three years, during which time Salome led a life of severe penance, fasting, watching, and spending the nights in the church until matins were over, when she returned home on foot, but she suffered much from the cold in the winter.

The Church of Altaich was at that time ruled by Abbot Walther, who had a cell built for her in the wall of the choir. Here she was enclosed, and hoped to end her days in peace. A great joy was in store for her before her life ended.

When living at court, a relation on her father's side, named Judith, said also to have been a king's daughter,

had lived with Salome and apparently was much attached to her. Judith was a widow and made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem hoping to find Salome. How she heard of her at Altaich we are not told, but eventually she found her enclosed in the cell the abbot had built for her, and the meeting between the two is said to have been most joyful. Judith resolved to be a recluse also, and the abbot caused a cell to be built for her near Salome's. Judith was tempted terribly by the devil, and suffered from fear at night, but she persevered in the life she had chosen, and these two English princesses lived as anchoresses in a foreign land, having given up everything they possessed to be "prisoners of Christ."

Salome died first. They were both buried in their cells; Salome in the upper part of the choir on the south side, Judith at the east end. The date of their deaths is uncertain, but it was before or about 880.¹

¹ From *Boll.*, Jun. VII., p. 456.

CHAPTER IX.

IRISH ANCHORESSES.

Frances, Promptia, and Possenna—Piale—Bride—St. Bridgit—St. Monnima—St. Bega—St. Osmanna—St. Maxentia—St. Burian—St. Drusa—St. Kentigern—St. Modwena—St. Germaine.

FRANCES, PROMPTIA, AND POSSENNA VV. (5th Century).

THESE three sisters and their six brothers, all of whom are honoured as saints, belonged to a holy Irish family, and lived in the fifth century.¹ They all left Ireland and went to France at the end of that century, and, having arrived in the diocese of Rheims, St. Rémi, the Bishop of Rheims, appointed them certain solitary places on the banks of the Marne, where they followed the anchoritic life. Their separate cells were situated at such a distance apart that they could from time to time visit each other, and particularly their eldest brother, St. Gibrien,² the best known of them, who was a priest and acted as a director to his brothers and sisters; his own cell was at a place called Cole. He was buried in

¹ From Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 1040.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 1040.

his hermitage, and many miracles attest his sanctity, but the date of his death is not known.

The names of the other brothers are SS. Hélain, Trésan, Germain, Abran, and Pétran. Of these Hélain and Trésan were also priests, and St. Trésan was the curé of Mareuil-sur-Marne. Very little besides this is known of any of these holy anchorites and anchoresses, except that they all sanctified their lives by austerities and penitence, and from time to time visited their eldest brother St. Gibrien to obtain counsel and direction in the spiritual life.¹

ST. PIALE VM. (A.D. 455).²

Piale was the daughter of an Irish king, and sister of St. Fingar, the hermit. She followed him to Brittany, where he had retired to lead the anchoritic life, and lived in a hermitage close to him; but they were both murdered by a Breton prince about the year 455. They are honoured in Brittany.

ST. BRIDE OR ITA V. (6th Century).³

St. Bride was another Irish saint of royal birth. She was born at Nandesi, County Waterford, in the sixth century. She renounced the world and retired into a grotto at the foot of Mount Luach, in County Limerick. Here she lived for some time, and then founded a monastery for nuns at Cluain Creidhal, where she passed the rest of her life in austerity and mortification. She

¹ From Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 1190.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 724.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 460.

taught that perfection was most easily attained by being recollected in God.¹

ST. BRIDGIT V. (*6th Century*).²

St. Brigid or Bridgit of Ireland, not to be confounded with St. Birgit or Bridget of Sweden, was born at Fochard, in Ulster, and lived for a short time an anchoritic life in a cell under an oak called Killdara, or cell of the oak, from which the county Kildare takes its name. She received the veil from St. Mel, a nephew of St. Patrick, but was soon joined by other women, and they formed themselves into a religious community, which is said to have been the first convent of women in Ireland.

She lived in the sixth century, but though she is greatly venerated in Ireland, little seems to be accurately known of her history. She died about 581.

ST. MONNIMA OR DARERCA (A.D. 518).

Even less is known of this recluse, though she also is much venerated in Ireland; but there were several saints of this name, and some confusion exists about them. One account says she was a friend of St. Bridget, and that she crossed over to Galloway and lived in a cave.³ Another says she lived a most austere life of penance and contemplation on Mount Cullen in Ireland, and that she died about 518.⁴

¹ Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, Vol. I., p. 234.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 29; Migne, Vol. I., p. 480.

³ Stanton's *Menology*, p. 310.

⁴ Butler, Vol. VII., p. 79.

ST. BEGA (IRISH: *uncertain date*).

St. Bega of Ireland is sometimes considered to be the same as our English saint of that name. The Irish Bega lived an anchoritic life for some years in Scotland, and then entered the monastery of Hacanos, near Egremont, in Cumberland, where she passed thirty years as a nun, practising faithfully all religious virtues. She is the patron saint of Norway, and is honoured there on September 6th by the faithful.¹ She died in the eighth century according to Migne, but the Bollandists consider she was the same person as St. Bee or Hieu, the English saint, and they deny the story of St. Bega ever being in Norway.² Butler thinks there were two saints of this name.

ST. OSMANNA (*7th Century*).³

St. Osmanna lived in the seventh century; she was Irish and of high birth. She left Ireland and retired to Brittany in order to live a life of celibacy. She settled near St. Brioux, where in solitude and piety she passed the rest of her life. For several centuries her relics were kept in the church of St. Denys, near Paris, but they were scattered by the Calvinists in 1567.

ST. MAXENTIA VM. (*before 7th Century*).⁴

This recluse won the crown of martyrdom. She was a noble Irish lady of royal birth. She left her native

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 383.

² Stanton's *Menology*, p. 520.

³ Butler, Vol. IX., p. 119.

⁴ Butler, Vol. II., p. 429; Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, p. 460.

land and went to France, where she lived as a recluse near Senlis, on the Oise, in order to preserve her virginity. She was, however, pursued by a wicked lover, who tried to induce her to break her vow, and murdered her and her maid, St. Rosalie, who had fled with her. The date of her death is uncertain; she was venerated as far back as the seventh century.

Her remains are kept at Pont St. Maxence, a small town on the Oise. She is supposed to have lived in the sixth century.

ST. BURIAN (A.D. 630).¹

Little is known of this holy virgin saint. She was Irish, but left Ireland, where she is venerated, for Cornwall, and shut herself up in an oratory which she had built, and there passed her life in solitude and contemplation, and was afterwards buried in it. A collegiate church was built later on the spot by King Athelstan. She died about 630. The village of St. Burian, Cornwall, is named after her, and she was honoured there before the Reformation.

DOMNICA OR DRUSA M. (8th Century).²

Domnica, or Drusa, was the sister of St. Indractus, an Irish saint. She came over to England from Ireland with him and seven others, all of noble birth, to a place called Skapwith, near Glastonbury. Here they lived in solitude and penance, edifying all who saw them by their holy lives; but they were all murdered by robbers.

¹ Stanton's *Menology*, p. 316.

² *Ibid.*

The date of their martyrdom is uncertain, but it was in the eighth century.

ST. KENTIGERNE (A.D. 729).¹

St. Kentigerne was the daughter of an Irish chief, Kelly Ferlach, prince of Leinster. She married and had one son, St. Felan, who for some years left the monastery to which he belonged to live in a cell close to it. On the death of her husband, St. Kentigerne went to Scotland, where she became a nun and edified the community by her sanctity and by the rigour of her penances. She retired to Loclonmont, in the island of Inchelroch, on the Irish coast, where she died in the year 729. A parish church was built after her death and dedicated to her.

ST. MODWENA (A.D. 840).²

St. Modwena was an Irish nun who came to England in A.D. 840, when King Ethelwulf, who had heard of her sanctity, asked her to take charge of the education of his daughter, the Princess Editha, whose brother had been healed by her prayers. After this, St. Modwena founded several nunneries, and then for seven years led an anchoritic life on an island meadow in the Trent, called Andresey, from St. Andrew, to whom she dedicated her oratory. Her remains were eventually removed to an abbey at Burton-on-Trent.³

She lived to a great age at Andresey. She was ac-

¹ Migne, Vol. II., p. 203.

² Butler, Vol. VII., p. 105.

³ *Ibid.*

accompanied when she left Ireland by St. Edith and three others named Ositha, Athy, and Lina.

ST. GERMAINE.¹

St. Germaine, or Germana, was of Irish birth, and it is believed her father was a prince; he was certainly a pagan, and was much annoyed at his daughter's conversion to Christianity. When she was baptised, Germaine made a vow of virginity, to keep which she was obliged to leave her home and her country, and took refuge in France. Here she retired to a spot near Vermandois, and there led an anchoritic life. Her father discovered her retreat, and it is said that on her refusal to apostatise and return to paganism, he beheaded her. She is honoured at St. Quentin, in Brittany.

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 1267.

CHAPTER X.

LATER ENGLISH ANCHORESSES.

(Uncanonised.)

*Mother Juliana : Her "Revelations of Divine Love"—
The anchoresses of Tarente—Beatrice of Colyford—
Lucy de Newchirche—Dame Joan Clopton—Alice—
Margaret Kirkby—Carmelite anchoresses.*

THE life of an anchoress was so essentially hidden, that even the names of most of those who lived this heroic life of sacrifice are now lost in obscurity. There were several living in this country up to the very time of the dissolution of the monasteries. The county of Norfolk seems to have more traces of anchor-holds than any other part of England, but it was so rich in monasteries and shrines in olden times that it was called the Holy Land of England.

In old wills, from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, small legacies are frequently left to anchoresses (and anchorites also), who are mentioned by name as living in certain anchor-holds, and in old episcopal registers mention of anchoresses as taking their vows or obtaining the bishop's license to lead an anchoritic life is some-

times made. Sometimes we come upon the account of one where we should not think of looking for it, enclosed as it were perpetually even in memory, as in the preface to the Psalter of Richard Rolle of Hampole, where he mentions incidentally a friend of his, a holy anchoress, of whom more hereafter.

It is therefore obvious that it would be an impossible task to attempt to give anything like a complete account of English anchoresses, who were probably most numerous in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and this little volume does not profess to include more than a few of the better known and most accessible to investigation. Of these, Mother Juliana of Norwich is the most celebrated, and of her only very meagre information is obtainable, though from her book, "The Revelations of Divine Love," much may be gathered as to her interior life, the nature of her thoughts, and the characteristics of her soul.

MOTHER JULIANA OF NORWICH (1343-1443).

This holy woman is sometimes spoken of as St. Julian, but she was never canonised, or even beatified. The church near which her cell was situated was dedicated to St. Julian, and probably that was the cause of her being locally spoken of as St. Julian. This St. Julian was himself an anchorite; he lived in the fourth century, and, being sold as a slave, recovered his liberty on the death of his master, whereupon he entered a monastery, and in his cell made himself a sort of tomb, in which he

lived.¹ Mother Juliana is also called Lady Juliana.² Both Fr. Collins, in his preface to her "Revelations," and Mr. Fosbrooke speak of her as the Lady Julian. The former also says she was probably a Benedictine nun who had been allowed to become a recluse; if so, she would be entitled to be called Dame, as all Benedictine nuns have that privilege; the title "lady" is only the translation of the Latin *Domina*.

Her surname was probably Lampit, and she was born in 1343,³ and as she was still living in 1443 she must have been at least a centenarian. She is said to have been about thirty in 1373 when her visions took place, and she was then living in her anchorage.⁴ This was situated in the east part of St. Julian's churchyard in Norwich, the advowson of which church then belonged to Carrow Abbey, having been given to it by King Stephen.⁵ A community of Benedictine nuns was then established at Carrow, or Car-Diew, in the suburbs of Norwich, and the revenues of St. Julian's church helped to support them.⁶

By her own account she was not learned, for she says in her old-fashioned English, "I can no letter," but she must have had a considerable knowledge, both of theology and philosophy, as her "Revelations" testify. She anticipated one, at least, of the questions which

¹ See Butler.

² *Revelations of Divine Love*, with Preface by Henry Collins. See Preface *British Monachism*.

³ See Preface to *Revelations of Divine Love*.

⁴ See *The Norfolk Antiquarian Miscellany*, Vol. II., Part II.

⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶ Preface to *Revelations*.

disturb some minds at the present day; she found difficulty in reconciling the doctrine of eternal punishment with her sense of the love of God. She also held very pronounced opinions on predestination, and sin in the predestinate was incomprehensible to her; "but her 'Revelations' have always been considered perfectly orthodox by devout and learned men."¹

The foundations of her cell, which was occupied by other anchoresses till the dissolution, were still to be seen when Blomefield wrote his "History of Norfolk," in 1768. He says she was living there as a strict recluse in 1393, with two servants to attend her in her old age in 1443. He adds that "in those days this woman was esteemed of the greatest holiness."²

The eastern part of St. Julian's church has been rebuilt since Blomefield's time, so that it cannot be discovered now whether her cell was a hermitage or actually attached to the church.

The first edition of her "Revelations" was edited by Dom Cressy, O.S.B., and published in 1670; the MS. is in the British Museum. In the edition of 1877 the antique spelling is altered, but the quaint old language is preserved;³ the style is poetical, though sometimes rather obscure owing to the archaisms, which nevertheless add to its charm. A most tender spirit of love breathes throughout the book, and though her soul is

¹ Preface to the *Revelations of Divine Love*, by Father Collins.

² Blomefield's *History and Antiquities of the County of Norfolk*, Vol. X., p. 282.

³ See Preface to *Revelations*.

sorely afflicted by the wickedness of the world and the mystery of sin, joy prevails over sadness and lights up her cell.

It is impossible to read these "Revelations" without feeling one's heart go out to the devout and loving soul who in such simple and homely words can kindle a fire in that humble cell which, six centuries later, still has the power to warm the colder hearts of a later generation, that can only look with wonder at the faith which enabled weak women to live enclosed for life in a living grave.

The old MS. containing the visions begins as follows—
"Here es a Vision schewed be the godeness of God to a devoute Woman, and hir name is Julian, that is recluse atte Norwyche and yet is on life A.D. 1442." ¹

In the "Revelations" we read that they were made
"to a simple creature that could no letter living in mortal flesh in the year of our Lord 1373 the 8th day of May, which creature desired afore three gifts by the grace of God." ²

The second of these favours that she asked was bodily sickness in youth at thirty years of age, and she continues, "When I was thirty years old and a half God sent me a bodily sickness in which I lay three days and three nights, and on the fourth night I took all my rites of Holy Church and weened not to have lived till day." ³

She describes this illness in her quaint language, and tells us how on the third night she often "weened to

¹ Blomefield.

² *Revelations of Divine Love*, p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

have passed and so weened they that were with her.”¹ The priest, or “my curate,” as she called him, is sent for and brings a crucifix and sets it before her and says, “I have brought the image of thy Maker, look there-upon and comfort thee therewith.” She obeys him and then the room grows dark as it were night, and she thinks “verily to have passed,” but suddenly all her pain was taken from her, and “I was as whole as ever I was before.”² Then began the revelations, which lasted from four in the morning till noon or past; they were sixteen in number.

As the titles of the revelations give some idea of the nature of them, we give them below.*

Besides these revelations, she had one dreadful vision at night in her sleep, and when she woke she says, “scarce had I any life; the persons that were with me beheld me and wetted my temples, and my heart began

¹ *Revelations of Divine Love.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

* Revelations—(1) is of His precious crowning of thorns; (2) of the disfiguring of His fair face in tokening of His dear worthy Passion; (3) is how God doth all things except sin; (4) the scourging of His tender body with plenteous shedding of His precious blood; (5) is that the fiend is overcome by the Passion of Christ; (6) is the worshipful thanking of our Lord God in which He rewardeth all His blessed servants in Heaven; (7) is oftentimes feeling of weal and woe; (8) is of the last pains of Christ and of His cruel dying; (9) is of the grievous bodily thirst of Christ; (10) is our Lord Jesus Christ shewing His blessed heart even cloven in two by love; (11) is a high ghostly shewing of His dear worthy Mother; (12) that our Lord God is all Sovereign and most worthy Being; (13) that the Lord God willeth that we have great regard of all His deeds; (14) that our Lord God is the ground of our beseeching; (15) how the absence of God is our great pain, and our patient abiding is pleasing to Him; (16) continuation of 15.

to take comfort." This dreadful vision, or "ugly shewing," as she quaintly calls it, was the only one that was made in her sleep.¹

She is visited after this vision by a religious person, the interview with whom she thus describes:—"He asked me how I fared, and I said 'I had raved to-day,' and he laughed loudly and drolly. And I said 'The cross that stood before my face methought it bled fast.' And with the word the person that I spake to waxed all sad and marvelled. . . . And when I saw that he took it so sadly and with so great reverence I waxed full greatly ashamed, and would have been shriven, but I could tell it to no priest, for I thought 'How should a priest believe me when by saying I raved I shewed myself not to believe our Lord God?'"²

After the revelations her illness returned, and with it came great spiritual dryness and desolation, accompanied with bodily pain, and she "mourned heavily for feeling of my bodily pains and for failing of comfort ghostly and bodily."

Of the external circumstances of her life more than this does not appear to be known, except that she lived certainly till 1443, which seems to show an anchoritic life was not altogether unhealthy. Of her inner life, and of the thoughts that supported her much more can be gathered from the "Revelations," from which it is evident that her life of mystical union with our Lord was as real to her as her exterior life. He was with her,

† ¹ *Revelations of Divine Love*, p. 251.

² *Ibid.*, p. 252.

and so strong was her sense of His nearness that she says "It is easier to know God than our own soul, God being nearer to us."¹ So strong was her sense of His presence that she constantly speaks of "His homeliness and His courtesy" as she might speak of the manner of an earthly sovereign. "And of all sight that I saw this was most comfort to me that our good Lord that is so reverend and so dreadful is so homely and so courteous."² This marvellous courtesy is, she says, the "most fulness of joy that we shall have." Equally strong is her realisation of His tender love for her soul, which she expresses in the most simple, familiar, and touching language.

Another source of joy hereafter, as revealed to her, is the thanks which our Lord will bestow on His servants. This is threefold: "The first joy of the worshipful thanks with which He receiveth His servants is the worship* and thanks that he shall receive of our Lord, the second that all the creatures in heaven shall see the worshipful thanking, and the third that it shall last without end."³

Her sense of the tenderness of our Lord's love for us is so great that she speaks of Him as our mother. "Jesus is our very Mother, not feeding us with milk, but with Himself, opening His side to us."⁴ And in another place she says, "God Almighty is our natural Father, and God all-wisdom is our natural Mother, with

¹ *Revelations of Divine Love*, p. 209.

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

*"Worship" is here used in the old sense.

the love and goodness of the Holy Ghost, which is all one God, one Lord." ¹

But enough has been quoted from this beautiful old book to show the brighter thoughts which lighted up the cell of this holy anchoress; there were darker ones too when she spoke of sin and eternal punishment.

After Mother Juliana's death the cell in which she had spent so many years was lived in by the following anchoresses:—²

1472 Dame Agnes.

1481 Dame Elizabeth Scott.

1510 Lady Elizabeth.

1524 Dame Agnes Edrygge (probably Etheridge, an old Norfolk family).

The anchoress of St. Julian's, Norwich, is a frequent legatee in wills in 1487.³

THE ANCHORESSES OF TARENTE (13th Century).

These anchoresses, for whom "Ancren Riwe" was written, were three sisters of good family, who, with their servants or lay-sisters, lived at a place now called Tarrant-Keynston, near Crayford Bridge on the river Stour, in Dorsetshire, an anchoretic life in the thirteenth century. Very little is known of them, not even their names. It has been suggested that they were the sisters of the reputed author of "Ancren Riwe," but, except that he addresses them as "sisters," there seems

¹ *Revelations of Divine Love*, p. 219.

² See Preface to *Revelations of Divine Love*.

³ *Beauties of England and Wales*, by John Britton, 1812.

no reason for supposing this, and if they were Cistercian nuns,¹ as the editor of that book thinks probable, the author would so address them.

Their anchorage, the buildings of which were destroyed when the monasteries were suppressed, is described as a "little monastery for nuns" built by the founder, one Ralph de Kahaines, evidently the lord of the manor of Kainston, near his own house in the time of Richard I., dedicated to our Lady and all Saints;² he also gave to the inmates a tithe of the bread made in his house, and of salt pork and of cattle.

If Richard Poore were the author of "*Ancren Riwe*," these anchoresses must have lived at the end of the thirteenth century, as the MS. is semi-Saxon and thirteenth century, and Richard Poore was Bishop of Salisbury from 1217-1229. Father Dalgairns says the author was certainly a Dominican, because the list of prayers given by him as being in use among the lay-brethren of his order are nearly the same as those prescribed in the rule of St. Dominic,³ but the general opinion as to the authorship of the book is in favour of Richard Poore, though it is sometimes ascribed to Simon of Ghent, who was Bishop of Salisbury from 1297 to 1315. Richard Poore came from Tarente, so it was only natural he should have written the rule for these anchoresses who were living in his native place.⁴

From "*Ancren Riwe*" we learn that these three

¹ See Preface to *Ancren Riwe*.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Essay on Spiritual Life of Mediæval England*, by Father Dalgairns, prefixed to *Scale of Perfection*.

⁴ *Ancren Riwe*, p. 195.

sisters had left the world in the bloom of youth to lead the anchoritic life, and that their doing so had led to much talk about them, which the author feared might do them harm by flattering them. We also learn that they were maintained by a friend, and from his hall near their anchorage their servants obtained all that they required.

Mention is made in various old registers and other works of the following anchoresses:—

In the year 1256, at Massingham, in Norfolk, Lady Ela, niece of Bishop Suffield, lived with a companion as recluses. She is mentioned in that bishop's will, which is dated A.D. 1256.¹

In 1332 Beatrice de Colyford, a widow, lived in a cell in the chapel of St. Kalixtus, in the parish of Colyford, in the diocese of Exeter. Bishop Grandison gave faculties to the abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Newenham, in the same diocese, to enclose her and to wall up the door of her house, he "being willing to encourage her in this laudable proposal."²

Coleforde, in Colyton, now a village in Devonshire, was made a borough by Thomas Basset before the reign of Edward I.³

In 1351 Lucy de Newchirche received letters from the Bishop of Worcester, after due enquiry had been made into her life and morals, addressed to the arch-

¹ *Index Monasticus*, by Richard Taylor, 1821, pp. 14, 65.

² *The Register of Bishop Grandison*.

³ See Lyson's *Devon*, p. 130.

deacon, directing him to enclose the said anchoress in the hermitage of St. Brandon, near Bristol.¹

In the fourteenth century there existed at Pilton, near Barnstaple, in North Devon, a priory and a recluse. This recluse, named Alicia, lived in a cell formerly a chapel, dedicated to St. Agnes, in the churchyard of the parish church at Pilton. She obtained permission in 1332 from the Bishop for Mass to be celebrated in her cell.²

In 1369 Dame Joan Shardelow, widow of Sir John Shardelow, Knight, appeared before Bishop Percy and took the vows of a recluse in the college of Thompson, a village near Watton, in Norfolk.³

In 1471-1479 Katharine Foster lived as a recluse in a house called the Ancess-house at the Black Friars, London. The house was near the bridge, and was probably tenanted before this by an anchorite called the Hermit of New Brigge. Katharine Foster is mentioned as receiving a legacy of 20d. in 1472, and in 1471 a legacy was given to her maid, the value of which is not stated.⁴

Until the dissolution, this same ancess-house was tenanted by an anchoress, for it is recorded that in the second year of Edward VI. (1548), "it was agreed that Kateryn Man, late recluse on the house of the late Black Friars, should have 20s. yearly during her life, the

¹ Fosbrooke's *British Monachism*, p. 489.

² *Register of Bishop Grandison*.

³ *Index Monasticus*, Introduction, p. xiv.

⁴ *History of the Religious Orders*, by John Kirkpatrick, 1725.

same Kateryn relinquishing to the commonalty all such rights as she had in the same ancess-house with the appurtenances.”¹

DAME JOAN CLOPTON (*d.* 1430).²

This recluse was the widow of Sir William Clopton, Knight, of Quinton, in Gloucestershire. She was the daughter of Alexander Besford or Pearsford of Besford, in Worcestershire, and an heiress; she had one son, who was sixteen at the time of his father's death, and one daughter, who inherited her parents' estates, as the son seems to have died in youth.

Sir William Clopton died in 1419, and after his death Dame Johanna became a recluse at Quinton, where she was buried, in 1430, in the church in a small chapel east of the south aisle. On the top of the altar tomb in which she lies is a brass with an effigy of her, and inscriptions and the arms of the Besfords and Cloptons; it is still in good condition.

It is considered probable that Sir William Clopton, who was a religious and charitable man, built this chapel, and that the cell in which his widow subsequently lived adjoined it. In the effigy she is dressed as a nun with a veil and wimple and a long cloak over her habit; she has no girdle, but the cloak is fastened with two cords with tassels at the ends, which reach below the waist; the sleeves of the habit are quite tight, and have a

¹ *History of the Religious Orders.*

² See *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society for 1888-89*, pp. 162-176.

narrow band of fur round the wrist; on one hand is a ring with a jewel. We gather from the inscription that Lady Clopton gave willingly and liberally to the neighbouring poor and distressed.*

The following is a translation of it:—

O Christ! grandson of Anne, have mercy on Joan Clopton,
 Who, as a widow, was consecrated to Thee, and enclosed here;
 Her husband having died as a soldier. For Thy sake, JESU,
 She made great sacrifices, generous to the miserable and to
 guests,
 Thus she bestowed her wealth on venerable temples and on
 the poor,
 Sending her good works to heaven that she might follow.
 For merits so great, give to her blessed realms;
 Let not purgatory detain her, but let the palace (court) of God
 bless her.

ALICE (*d.* 1270).

This holy recluse is said by Matthew Paris to have led a life of "remarkable holiness and innocence," and he adds "that miracles are reported to have been performed at her tomb." She was sister to Margaret, also a very

*Inscription on Brass of Dame Joan Clopton (*Quinton*):—

"Christe nepos Anne Clopton miserere Joh'e,
 Que tibi sacrata clauditur hic vidua;
 Milite defuncto sponso, pro te ihu fuit ista,
 Larga libens miseris prodiga hospitibus,
 Sic ven' abilibus Templis, sic fudit egenis,
 Mittent ut celis quas sequeretur opes.
 Pro tantis meritis, sibi dones regna beata,
 Nec premat urna rogo sv beet aula Dei."

holy woman, but the information with regard to her is not sufficient to warrant the title of saint. They were both sisters of St. Edmund, Archbishop, to whose guardianship they were left on their mother's death, when they both desired to embrace the religious life, and were accordingly clothed and professed in the Benedictine Priory of Catesby, in Northamptonshire, where they led most holy lives. They were both Prioresses of Catesby, Alice succeeding Margaret, who died in 1257, in that office.

As Matthew Paris speaks of Alice distinctly as a recluse, she was, as often happened, probably enclosed within the precincts of the Priory. She died in 1270.¹

MARGARET KIRKBY (*14th Century*).

Margaret Kirkby was a recluse at Ainderby, in Lincolnshire, in the fourteenth century. She was a contemporary and a great friend of Richard Rolle of Hampole, the author of a celebrated English commentary on the Psalms, who died in 1349. He was a hermit, and for twelve years his cell was about twelve miles from Ainderby, where Margaret was then enclosed. She is mentioned by name as "his beloved disciple and an anchoress" by a later poet in a prologue to Rolle's Commentary. He was born at Hampole, a small township in Alnwick-le-Street, Yorkshire, five miles from Doncaster. A Cistercian convent for nuns was founded there in 1170. He was a chantry priest, and lived the eremitical life near Doncaster before he moved nearer

¹ *Menology*, p. 394.

to Ainderby. His Commentary was not published till 1536, nearly two hundred years after his death.

His friendship with Margaret Kirkby lasted till death separated them. He is said to have loved her "with a perfect affection of charity; he used to instruct her in the love of God, and directed her in the ruling of life by his holy institution," that is in the anchoritic life.¹

He cured her twice, merely by his presence, of a seizure. On one of these occasions she had been ill for thirteen days, and had lost the power of speech, and was suffering so much pain that she could get no rest. A countryman rode to Richard Rolle's hermitage to fetch him, and when he came he found the recluse dumb and suffering most bitter pains. He sat down by her window and they ate together. Dinner being ended, it happened that the recluse desired to sleep. So oppressed with sleep, her head sank down by the window at which Richard, the saint of God, was reclining, and when she had thus slept a little time, supporting herself in some measure against Richard, suddenly such severe pain seized her in her sleep that with a vehement impulse she seemed to wish to break open violently the window of her house, and in her vexation she awoke from sleep, and, the power of speech being granted her, she burst forth with great devotion in these words, "Gloria Tibi Domine," and Blessed Richard finished the verse she had begun, saying, "Qui natus es de Virgine," and the remaining words to the end. Then he said to

¹ *Richard Rolle of Hampole*, by C. Horstmann, Vol. II., Introduction, p. xxxi.

her, "Now speech is restored to you, use it as a woman [*loquax bene*] who talks sensibly."¹

CARMELITE ANCHORESSES.

The first Carmelite anchoress was Emma, daughter of Sir Milo Stapelton, Knight, who had been standard-bearer in the expedition against Alexandria, 1365, under the Papal Legate St. Peter Thomas, a Carmelite, Patriarch of Constantinople. On his return to England Sir Milo is said to have introduced the Trinitarian Order to this country. He died in 1372.

Emma Stapelton took the veil at Norwich on April 1st, 1421, from the hands of the Provincial, Thomas Netter de Walden. He assigned the Prior of Norwich, William Thorpe, Sub-prior Bartholomew Acton, Master John Thorpe, Master Adam Hemlyngton, and Adam Hobbes as her confessors and counsellors. She died on December 2nd, 1422.

Alice Wakelyn, of gentle birth, received the veil at the hands of the same Provincial, date unknown. She died in 1426 at Northampton.

"From the rule of these recluses it appears that they faithfully kept many points of the rule of the Friars. They rose at midnight from Holy Rood day [September 14th] to Easter, and at dawn in summer. They abstained from flesh-meat on all days except certain feasts; they fasted on the Fridays and Saturdays throughout

¹ Translated from Introduction to *Richard Rolle of Hampole*, by C. Horstmann.

the year; on Fridays their diet was bread and ale. They were shriven and 'houselled' three times a year, which was then considered a great number. They wore the hair shirt unless ill-health required a dispensation. Above all, they said a prodigious number of vocal prayers." ¹

¹ *Suffolk Archaeological Proceedings*, Vol. X., Part II., p. 198, by Father Benedict Zimmermann.

CHAPTER XI.

FRENCH ANCHORESSES.

St. Tarsice—St. Triése—St. Syre—SS. Pusinna, Lintrude, and Houlde—St. Tygris—St. Monégondes—St. Bertilie—St. Bertha—St. Ulphe—St. Delphina—St. Hildeburg—St. Asceline—St. Colette—Joanna—Joanna la Vodrière—Alix la Bourgotte—Agnes Durochier—Marguèrite—Basilla—Floria—Guillemette de Faussard.

THE anchoritic life seems to have been followed more largely in France during the middle ages than in other countries, for recluses were found in nearly all the dioceses, and the cities of Toulouse and Lyons were surrounded with a wreath of reclusories, so that praying women were to a certain extent the watchers of those towns. Unfortunately only a few of the names even of French recluses have come down to us, compared to the list of German recluses.¹ Several have been raised to the altar, some have been declared venerable, others have been beatified, and a few have been canonised, of whom St. Bertilie is one of the most celebrated.

At Toulouse there were recluses living in cells at the

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon*, by Wetzer and Welte, Vol. VI., p. 642.

gate of St. Stephen, the gate of Narbonne, the gate of Matabovis, the gate of Villa Nuova ; one on the new bridge of Garmurra, and one above the bridge of St. Cyprian.¹

At Lyons eleven reclusories surrounded the town, which from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries were mostly inhabited by women, some of whom were notable servants of God, to wit, Emma, Sina, Raimina Blesmerers, Constantine, Letwisa, and Joan de la Boisse. After the thirteenth century these cells were mostly occupied by men. They belonged to a neighbouring church or convent, by whom they were lent to suitable persons for life ; they were finally abolished by the Huguenots.²

ST. TARSICE (A.D. 609).³

St. Tarsice or Tarsitia was, it is believed, a granddaughter of the King Clotilde the first. She consecrated herself to God by a vow of virginity and left the world, and lived in a desert near Rodez an anchoritic life. She died about the year 609.

ST. TROJECIA (4th Century).

Trojecia is commonly known as Triése in France. Her biographer suggests that her name was perhaps derived from the Greek Trisagia or Thrice Holy. She was born of poor parents at Poitiers ; from her childhood she despised the world and consecrated herself body and soul to Christ. That she might worship Him more

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 1078.

sincerely, free from every other bond, she undertook a pilgrimage to all the most celebrated churches in Aquitania, which increased her zeal and the ardour of her love for God.

When she arrived at St. Stephen's church at Rodez she passed the remainder of a very long life there in rigid penance, her soul, burdened with the flesh, ever longing for the presence of her most beloved Lord, her spiritual Spouse, and for the society of the blessed in heaven. Both before and after her death she showed innumerable marks of sanctity, and was buried in the church of St. Stephen.

She is considered by the Bollandists to be probably the same as St. Triasia, a disciple of St. Hilary, who was also a native of Poitou; St. Trojcia is honoured on the 9th of June and St. Triasia on the 16th of August; but the biographer of St. Trojcia thinks there is little doubt they were the same person.

St. Triasia certainly made a vow of virginity into the hands of St. Hilary in her youth; she then gave up the world, consecrated herself to Christ, and passed the rest of her life enclosed in a cell. She may have been appointed to some office in the church of Poitiers and lived near it and died abroad, or she may have been a recluse elsewhere, but her biographer believes her to have lived perpetually as a recluse in her own country.¹ If she did, she is not the same person as St. Trojcia, who died and was buried at Rodez.

¹ *Boll.*, Jun. II., p. 178.

ST. SYRE (*5th Century*).

St. Syra or Syria, commonly called St. Syre, was a matron at Troyes, in France. She had been blind forty years when she heard that the Emperor's sight had been restored by the blood of St. Sabinian, who suffered martyrdom under Aurelian. She determined to visit the holy martyr's tomb, and told her parents to lead her to it. Her parents, however, deserted her, and would not continue what they apparently thought a vain quest.

A little boy who was related to the saint, however, came forward and offered to lead her to the spot where St. Sabinian suffered martyrdom. They proceeded hand in hand, neither of them knowing where it was, but when they reached the place where St. Sabinian's remains rested, their feet were fixed and they could go no further. St. Syre knelt down humbly and prayed earnestly and confidently that her sight might be restored, and her eyes were opened and she saw the light of day and the tomb of St. Sabinian.

The news of the miracle attracted many people to the spot, and St. Syre suggested that they should honour the place by building a church there, and, in the opinion of many, her zeal and exhortations led to the building of the church of St. Sabinian, where she, out of gratitude, devoted herself to the service of God and the holy martyr.

She immolated herself here as a living victim, afflicting herself with fasting, vigils, and many prayers and privations, so that her life was indeed a martyrdom. The

place of her burial is unknown; she is honoured on June 8th.¹

She is said to have been enclosed in St. Sabinian's Chapel at Troyes.²

SS. PUSINNA, LINTRUDE, AND HOULDE (5th Century).

Pusinna was the most celebrated of the seven holy daughters of Sigmarus and Lutrude. Her parents were rich, generous, and pious; her mother especially was a very pious woman. The sisters were educated by a holy priest named Eugene, and Pusinna is said to have been learned from her tenth year. She made a vow of virginity into the hands of St. Alpino, Bishop of Chalons-sur-Marne, and afterwards remained in her father's house, but although consecrated by the bishop she was not enclosed there.

She was so charitable and her faith was so great that she thought if she gave all she possessed to the poor she would never be allowed to want herself. She was very humble, and spent her days in prayer and fasting, and at length retired to a lonely cell in the village of Bansion, near Corbie, where she was enclosed. When she was dying her sister Lintrude asked to be allowed to visit her to talk with her on spiritual matters, and after death to prepare her body for burial.

Pusinna, who was deprived of speech for five days, feared she would not be able to speak to her sister, whom she longed to embrace, but although her body seemed

¹ *Boll.*, Jun. II., p. 63.

² *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI.

to be almost like that of a corpse, her mind was clear, and she anxiously awaited Lintrude's arrival. At length Lintrude, accompanied by a holy priest, probably Eugene, entered the cell, and Pusinna recovering the use of speech, began to give thanks to God Who had granted her prayers and allowed her once more to see and embrace her sister. She died a holy death in the act of prayer, and was buried at Bansion. Those who came to her funeral praised her sanctity, to the great joy of Lintrude, and several miracles are recorded of her. She appears to have a wider reputation than her other sisters, though they are all honoured with public devotion.¹

The seven sisters all consecrated themselves to God, and made their vows into the hands of St. Alpin, from whom they received the veil. Lintrude, like Pusinna, retired afterwards into a little hermitage, where she gave herself up to a life of penance in a cell adjoining a church which she caused to be built, in which she was buried, but it is believed her body was afterwards taken to Corbie.²

A third sister, named Houlde, or Hou, remained after her consecration in her father's house, which the sisters after his death had turned into a convent, where they all lived the religious life till Lintrude became a recluse, when Houlde imitated her and Pusinna, and retired to a little hermitage. It is not known in what year she died, but it was in the latter part of the fifth century. Her

¹ *Boll.*, April III., p. 772.

² Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 800.

remains were moved to Troyes in 1158 and deposited in the church of St. Etienne there.

The remaining four sisters, Amy, Ménéould, Menne, and another whose name is not recorded, are locally honoured as saints also though they did not become recluses but remained in their own home after making their vows. The remains of St. Amy are in a church dedicated to her at Joinville. St. Pusinna's remains were removed to the Abbey of Herwoden, in Westphalia, in 860.¹

St. Lintrude's name is often corrupted into Lindru.

TYGRIS (*7th Century*).

Tygris was born at Maurienne, a town in a valley in Savoy; she was of noble birth, and received a good education. She showed great hospitality to pilgrims and priests, and ministered largely to the wants of the poor around her.

She had a sister a widow named Pigmenia, who lived with her and devoutly placed herself under obedience to her in spiritual matters; both fasted and watched and visited holy places. They learnt from some monks who were proceeding to Scotland from the Holy Land that some relics of St. John the Baptist had been taken to Alexandria and hidden there in a church consecrated to him. Full of faith they set out for Alexandria, determined to obtain a relic if possible. Tygris prostrated herself and vowed she would not leave the place unless

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 841.

she was worthy to receive a relic. She passed two years praying and daily prostrating herself before his tomb and asking to be presented with one of his bones.

Eventually her petition was miraculously granted, and she returned to Maurienne with her relic in a golden casket, rejoicing greatly at her prayers being heard. Rufus, the Bishop of Turin, in whose diocese the little town of Maurienne was situated, was urged by his arch-deacon to claim the relic, on the ground that so valuable a thing ought to be placed in the church at Turin, and not allowed to remain in a little town like Maurienne; but he and two other bishops in vain tried to get it, for Tygris, fearing to lose the precious gift which she had with such difficulty obtained, hid herself in a place called Loconia, where she built a hut or cell that she might be able in this remote spot to devote herself to prayer. She was disturbed in her devotions by an immense multitude of sparrows, who made such a noise that she prostrated herself before God and begged Him to deliver her from them. When she arose from her prayers the birds annoyed her more than ever, and flew hither and thither over her, but she commanded them in the name of Christ to leave the place, and presently they took flight, and it is said that from that day sparrows never again appeared in that place.

She concluded her days in a church¹ built in honour of St. John the Baptist, in which the relics were placed, at Maurienne.²

¹ *Boll.*, Jun. V., p. 667.

² *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI.

ST. MONÉGONDES (6th Century).¹

St. Monégondes was a French anchoress. She was born at Chartres in the sixth century. She married and had two daughters, both of whom died young. At their death, with her husband's consent, she built herself a cell at Chartres in which for some time she lived an anchoritic life of great austerity. Her cell contained no furniture, unless a mat on which she slept can be so called. Her food, which was brought to her by a servant, was only coarse oatmeal-bread and water.²

She afterwards moved to Tours, and there built herself another, in which she lived, near the celebrated church of St. Martin. She was joined by other holy women and they formed themselves into a community, and the cell became a convent. She died in the year A.D. 570.³

ST. BERTILIE (*d.* 687).

This holy virgin was a daughter of one of the most illustrious families of France. Her parents, who were pious as well as of high rank, brought her up in the fear of God, and instilled a horror of sin into her. She was desirous of consecrating her life wholly to God, but out of deference to her family was obliged to marry a young nobleman in her own rank named Guthland.

He was an exemplary character, and, being desirous of emulating Bertilie's solid virtue, he consented to their

¹ *Ancren Riwle*, p. 11.

² Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, Vol. VII., p. 34.

³ *Ibid.*

living as brother and sister instead of as husband and wife. They sanctified their union by the exercise of works of charity, distributing their immense income in alms, visiting the sick, and showing hospitality.

Bertilie survived her husband, and on his death she gave up all her property except one acre of land at Mareuil, near Mont St. Eloi, in Artois, on which she built an abbey church and adjoining it a cell for herself. In this retreat she passed the remainder of her life, making prayer her occupation. One day, having prayed longer than usual, she was seized with an illness from which she never recovered, but her sufferings only increased her fervour, and the more her strength failed the stronger became her hope of a blessed eternity. She died about 687. Her body was put into a shrine in 1228.¹

ST. BERTHA (*d.* 725).

St. Bertha was the daughter of Count Rigobert, and was born in the middle of the seventh century; she was highly educated, and passed her youth in innocence and piety. At the age of twenty she married Sigefroi, and had five daughters, of whom two, Gertrude and Déotile, are also honoured as saints. On the death of her husband she retired with these two daughters to a monastery, which she had founded in 682, and there took the veil and subsequently became the abbess. Count Roger or Rotgar, who wanted to marry Gertrude, revenged himself on her mother for allowing her to be

¹ Taken from Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 434.

a nun by calumniating her so that it reached the ears of the King Henri III. Bertha, then abbess, sought an interview with His Majesty, who recognised her innocence and took her under his protection.

On returning to the monastery, St. Bertha, after finishing the building of it, built three churches, one to St. Martin of Tours; and then resigning her post to her daughter Déotile, she retired into a cell to give herself up to contemplation, where Déotile often visited her to receive counsel and commands. St. Bertha died about the year 725; her relics were saved by the nuns when the monastery of Blangy, where she was buried, was destroyed by the Normans, and moved to a convent in Alsace in 895, but brought back to Blangy in the eleventh century, when the monastery was rebuilt.¹

ST. ULPHE (8th Century).

Ulphe, or Ulphia, was a native of Soissons or the neighbourhood, and was born in the beginning of the eighth century. She consecrated herself to God by a vow of virginity when she was quite young, unknown to her parents, who promised her in marriage to a suitor, but when her father learnt the nature of her vow he would not allow her to break it, and preferred to retract his own promise.

Ulphe, fearing other lovers, secretly left her father's house and travelled to Amiens, near which city she found a suitable spot for a hermitage, and determined to

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 432.

remain there. The following night she had a vision, in which she heard a voice telling her to follow him whom God should send her, and shortly after St. Domic, a priest and solitary in the neighbourhood, passed her on his way to assist at Mass at Amiens. Ulphe, seeing him, ran and prostrated herself at his feet, and begged him in the name of God to take her under his direction.

St. Domic, astonished at this proposition from a young strange girl in this lonely place, bade her wait until the next day for his answer, and in the meanwhile consulted God, and was inspired to grant her request. The next day he went to see her, gave her advice, and bade her go every night to the church at Amiens and make her prayer there, and left her a basket of provisions at his departure.

A little time after this, St. Domic and Ulphe were in the cathedral as the bishop, Chrétien, was about to say Mass, when it was revealed to him to give Ulphe the veil and ring, and to place her under St. Domic's guidance. He then gave her Holy Communion, and had a cell built for her near St. Domic's; here she lived and imitated the life and austerities of the old anchorites of the desert and soon made great progress in the spiritual life.

When St. Domic, who was an old man when she first made his acquaintance, fell ill, she nursed him till his death, and soothed his last moments by her care. She grieved for the loss of her spiritual father, but God sent her soon after a companion named Aurée to share her life. Later several others followed Aurée's example,

and Ulphe found herself at the head of a community, for whom she built a monastery at Amiens and made Aurée the superior; not wishing to give up the anchoritic life herself, she only visited it from time to time. She died after a short illness in the middle of the eighth century, and was buried in her cell, where afterwards was built the monastery of the Holy Ghost, and her relics and those of St. Domic were transferred to Amiens Cathedral.¹

ST. DELPHINA (*d.* 1369).

Strictly speaking, St. Delphina was not an anchoress, for she was never enclosed in a cell, but she did live the life of a recluse in her own castle for some years when she became a widow, so we have included her.

She was nominally the wife of St. Elzear, Count of Arian, in the Kingdom of Naples, but whose family was descended from Sahran of Provence. Delphina was the daughter of the lord of Pui Michel of Glandeves. When she was twelve years old she was betrothed to Elzear, then only a child of ten; three years after, they were married in the Castle of Pui Michel, but at Delphina's suggestion they secretly agreed to live as brother and sister.

So long as Elzear's parents lived they made their home with them after the custom of French people, but Elzear and Delphina fasted most rigorously in Lent and Advent, and also at other times. When Elzear was twenty-three his parents died, and they then moved to the Castle of Pui Michel, where they publicly took the

¹ From Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 1201.

vow of chastity, and he drew up a very strict rule of life for himself and his household, and Delphina, who was most obedient to him, led with him a most austere and holy life. One of Elzear's rules was if any one in the house offended another person, or spoke angrily or impertinently, he or she should beg the other person's pardon humbly, he judging this "the best and quickest means of mortifying a passion that has its root in pride."

Elzear used frequently to visit the leper hospitals, and cleanse and dress the sores of the lepers, and both he and Delphina were most charitable to the poor, giving large alms and also entertaining them hospitably.

When the Emperor Henry VII. invaded Naples, King Robert sent his own brother and Elzear to oppose him, and two battles were fought, in which they were victorious. On his return Elzear was sent as ambassador from the Court of Naples to Paris, where he fell ill and died, in 1323, aged 28. He is said never to have committed a mortal sin, and was canonized forty-six years after his death, while Delphina was still alive.

She lived at the court a model of all virtue until King Robert died in 1343, when his widowed queen became a Poor Clare in a convent she had formerly founded in Naples, and Delphina retired to Provence and led the life of a recluse in the castle of Ansois in heroic penance, spending her time in prayer, mortification, and works of charity. She died at Apt, near the castle, in 1369, the very year that St. Elzear's canonization was published, aged 76. She is named in the Franciscan Martyrology.¹

¹ Abridged from Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, Vol. X., pp. 375, 369.

V. HILDEBURG (*d.* 1115).

The Venerable Hildeburg was a French woman of rich and noble birth. Her father's name was Hervoens, her mother's Beatrice. Hildeburg married a Spanish nobleman named Robert Gallardon, by whom she had three sons. When her husband began to grow old, he entered a monastery and became a monk, and died piously there. Her sons and friends then persuaded her to marry again, and she agreed to espouse an officer of noble birth and large fortune. He came with a large retinue of soldiers to the wedding, but Hildeburg as she descended the wooden staircase in her wedding garments, which we are told were of many colours and of precious material, slipped and fell to the ground and hurt herself very much, bruising herself all over. She believed this to be a sign from God that she was to remain a widow, and she refused to marry again.

She was now converted to God, and lived the rest of her life in mortification, alms, fasts and works of mercy. She stayed for a time near the monastery of St. Martin at Pontoise, intent on works of charity, but afterwards she turned a poor mean little house near it into a cell, in which, because she loved this monastery better than any place, she took up her abode. She built an infirmary in the cloisters, and gave many ornaments to the church which her biographer says are kept to this day in the monastery, that is at the time he was writing. When the monks wanted food she supplied them out of her own purse.

She led a most austere life in this cell, kneeling with bare knees on the ground, and lying prostrate on her face in prayer both summer and winter. She bore hunger, thirst, and intense cold, and because in her youth she had learnt the Psalter she sung psalms night and day.

She begged her son William to give a certain portion of his fortune to the monastery; he at first refused, but afterwards promised to give the income he derived from this particular estate till one year after her death had elapsed. At the end of this year she appeared to him, and was very angry and asked him how he dared rob the Church, and finally he gave all this property to St. Martin's.

It appears Tertiaries frequently lived near this monastery under the direction of the abbot or abbess, and it was in the habit worn by them that Hildeburg was clothed. She was buried in St. Martin's, and many miracles are recorded after her death.¹

ST. ASCELINE (1121-1195).

St. Asceline was a relation of St. Bernard; her father's name was Joubert and he died when she was a little child of four or five years of age. Her mother, who was a very pious woman, retired with her on her father's death to a convent of nuns called Les Dames de Boulançon in the diocese of Troyes. St. Asceline was placed under St. Bernard's direction, and made great progress

¹ From *Boll.*, Jun. I., p. 361.

in devotion. When she was twelve years old she gave herself up to prayer and austerities.

About this time she was subject to great temptation from a wicked young priest, and she and her mother retired into a solitary place described as a desert near the monastery, and there led angelic lives under the direction of a holy priest who was living there. It was here that she lived the anchoritic life, practising great exterior austerities, and making humility the particular grace she aimed at, as it is the foundation of all virtue.

The nuns of Boulançon, who were canonesses of St. Augustine, embraced the Cistercian rule in 1149, and asked her to be their prioress. With the consent of St. Bernard she accepted the office, and with her mother entered the Cistercian order. She died at Boulançon in 1195.¹

ST. COLETTE (*d.* 1381).

St. Colette, afterwards the celebrated reformer of the Poor Clares, whose rule had become relaxed, passed two years of her life as a recluse. Her name was Nicolette Boellet. She was born at Corbie, in Picardy, in the year 1381; her birth was miraculous, for her mother was over sixty when Nicolette was born. Her father was a carpenter, and used to work at the large Benedictine abbey, then flourishing in the town of Corbie.²

As a child Colette loved prayer, poverty, and mortification, and wished to become a Poor Clare, but her

¹ *Histoire de l'Ordre de Cîteaux.*

² *Kirchen Lexikon.*

confessor, Father Pinet,¹ told her that no such community as St. Clare founded existed, referring to the modified rule of Pope Urban then followed by the second order of St. Francis, and he suggested that she should become a recluse² after she had tried her vocation as a lay sister in an Urbanite and also in a Benedictine convent. Colette consented, and a cell was made for her in the walls of a disused cloister adjoining the wall of the church of St. Étienne. The building, which was a little house, no longer exists, but in 1634 the window through which Colette heard Mass and received Holy Communion was discovered. The house consisted of two storeys, in the upper of which Colette lived. There were two rooms in this upper storey; the smaller was a sort of ante-room or hall, in which visitors who came to consult the recluse could speak to her through a grille.³ She lived in the larger room; this had one small window to admit light and air, and another window which looked into the church; this was high and narrow, and divided into an upper and under part; through the upper part, which was crossed by iron bars, she could see the altar; the lower part was closed by a shutter, and only opened for Confession and Holy Communion.

There was a stone bench under the window which admitted light and air, and a small cupboard in which her cup and plate were kept, but the cell contained no

¹ Migne, Vol. II., p. 1007.

² *Life of St. Colette*, by Mrs. Parsons (Burns and Oates), p. 40, from which this account of St. Colette is principally taken.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

furniture except three wooden stools. Her bed was straw placed on the floor, with a log of wood for a pillow and another log for the foot of the bed. She had no rugs or blankets, only rags and coarse material sewn together, and she never had a fire. She had devotional books, a crucifix and an image of our Lady, and her Breviary, for she said the Divine Office and the Office for the Dead daily.

At the ceremony of enclosure the Abbot said Mass, and Father Pinet preached, and at the moment of Communion the Abbot, with the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, turned to Colette, who took the three vows of poverty, chastity, and enclosure. At the conclusion of Mass the recluse was conducted by the clergy in procession to her cell, where the Abbot closed the door, and all then went away.

Two of her former companions were chosen to take her food every day to her cell. She had only one meal a day, which she took towards evening, and it generally consisted of bread and boiled vegetables, and water to drink. She entered this cell in the year 1403, when she was only twenty-two years old, and at first was tempted by the devil with depressing thoughts; then he sent hideous spectres to terrify her, but she dispersed them by holding out her crucifix.¹ Then her cell appeared to be filled with serpents, vipers, dogs, worms, and hideous birds, and she heard frightful noises. She used holy water, and made the sign of the cross, but finding these failed at first to deliver her, she turned

¹ *Life of St. Colette*, p. 54.

to prayer, and finally she conquered her adversary, and was left in peace and filled with consolations which more than compensated her for all that had gone before, but for years temptations and consolations alternated.

She led a supernatural life in her cell, so that it was said "she lived on prayer and the thought of God, for her soul was so united to Him that she had no thought apart from Him."¹ Yet she was not idle; she took care of the Church linen, and mended the clothes of the poor.

She was seen in ecstasy,² and her maids said the love of our Lord sustained her so that she forgot to eat, and when she did eat she took so little of the food they brought her that they thought angels must have fed her. This being rumoured abroad, people thronged to visit her, so that her time was occupied in talking to them and advising them, when she would fain have been at her prayers. She appealed to her confessor, Father Pinet, but at first he told her to receive these visitors, who came sometimes from long distances, and in obedience to him she did so; but at last he put a limit to these visits, and fixed certain hours for her to receive those who sought her advice, among whom were many priests. She told all who consulted her to keep the commandments and obey the laws of the Church.³

She was favoured with visions, and it is recorded that while she was living in this cell "Satan sometimes visited her in visible form, and his blows produced wounds and bruises."⁴

¹ *Life of St. Colette*, p. 47. ² *Ibid.*, p. 54. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 60. ⁴ *Ibid.*

After spending two years as a recluse, she joined the Poor Clares, whose order she eventually reformed.

B. JOANNA (*d.* 1246).¹

No details of the life of this recluse are known. She was a Cistercian nun in the formerly celebrated Cistercian monastery at l'Arrivoir, in the diocese of Troyes, where she was enclosed in a cell adjoining the church for twenty years or more. She was buried in the church in 1246.

*THE RECLUSES DES INNOCENS.*²

On the site now occupied by the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, Paris, was a celebrated reclusory attached to what was then the Church of the Holy Innocents. In the year 1247 there were four recluses living here.

JOANNA LA VODRIÈRE (1442).³

Here in a cell in the cemetery of the Holy Innocents lived Joanna la Vodrière, who was enclosed in the year 1442 on the 11th of October. A public sermon was preached on the occasion. There was a window into the church in the cell.

V. ALIX LA BOURGOTTE (1420-1466).⁴

Alix, or Adelais, la Bourgotte was originally a nun of St. Catherine. She then lived for forty-six years

¹ *Boll.*, Maij I., 534.

² Le Boeuf's *Paris*, Vol. I.

³ *Ibid.* ; Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 376.

⁴ Le Boeuf's *Paris*, Vol. I., p. 80 ; *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI., p. 640.

enclosed in a cell in the cemetery of the Holy Innocents. She died in 1466. Her tomb, with her figure in relief, is in the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois; she is holding a book, and wears a girdle like the Franciscans; this effigy is in brass. She was a contemporary of Agnes Durochier, a recluse at the church of St. Opportune, Paris.

JEANNE PANNONCELLE.¹

A later recluse in the same reclusory formerly inhabited by V. Alix la Bourgotte was Jeanne Pannoncelle. The officials of Paris ordered the Marguilliers to build her a cell here; they refused and were excommunicated until they complied. She seems to have been the last of the recluses of the Holy Innocents.

EGYPTIENNE DE BLOIS (14th Century).²

In the fourteenth century was enclosed at the church of St. Eustache, Paris, a woman from Blois, supposed by Le Boeuf to have come there on a pilgrimage to do penance, having formerly lived with the gipsies and followed their mode of life, for which reason she was called by the people Egyptienne de Blois, or the Gipsy of Blois.

AGNES DUROCHIER (1402-1482).³

This recluse was the only daughter of a rich Parisian merchant, and was born in the year 1384. She left

¹ Le Boeuf's *Paris*, Vol. I., p. 80.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 105.

³ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 1339.

the world to lead the anchoritic life when she was only eighteen. She had a cell built for herself near the Church of St. Opportune, in Paris, and was enclosed there on the 5th of October, 1402, by the Bishop of Paris, who himself sealed the door of her room. She there passed no less than eighty years without once leaving it, and was almost a hundred when she died in 1482.

MARGUÈRITE.¹

A recluse of this name lived in a cell in a corner of the garden called the Grange of St. Elvy, in the grounds of the Priory of St. Paul, near Paris, in the reign of Charles V. The king had a cell built there for her, and as the monks objected and complained, he appeased them by promising that after his death no more recluses should be allowed to live there.

BASILLA.²

A recluse of this name lived in the eleventh century in the crypt of the ruins of a convent of St. Victor, Paris, which was restored in 1113 as an Augustinian monastery.

FLORIA (*14th Century*).³

A recluse named Floria lived in a cell attached to the Church of St. Severin, Paris, in the middle of the fourteenth century in the reign of Charles V.

¹ Le Boeuf's *Paris*, Vol. II., p. 412.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 542.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 176.

HERMENSENDE (14th Century).¹

At the end of the same century a recluse named Hermensende lived in a cell in the Church of St. Medard, Paris. This was a rather celebrated cell, and was inhabited by various recluses in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Hermensende lived in the reign of Charles VI.

V. GUILLEMETTE DE FAUSSARD (1556-1561).

Mont Valérien, near Paris, was inhabited by hermits, as some authors think, for eight hundred years before the recluse Antoine lived in penance there about 1040, in the reign of Charles VI. Le Boeuf, however, thinks the hermits had only been there three hundred years before Antoine, whose cell was probably near the bottom of the mountain, but the place and date of his death are unknown. Le Boeuf thinks there were no hermits living there in the days of Guillemette Faussard, an illustrious recluse who entered her cell in 1556. She was born in Paris, in the parish of St. Saviour, but we are not told at what age she entered the anchoritic life. While she was living at Mont Valérien a foundation was made for recluses, and a chapel was built there for them. During the building of it Guillemette every night after her prayers fetched water for the workmen from the foot of the mountain and carried it to the place where they worked in sufficient quantities to last them all day.

She abstained from meat entirely, and often had only

¹ Le Boeuf's *Histoire de Paris*, Vol. II., p. 412.

bread and water, rarely eating fish or eggs, and contenting herself often with Holy Communion. She lived thus for five years, and died emaciated with her fasts, labours, and vigils, in 1561. She was buried at the entrance to the chapel, which was called the chapel of St. Saviour of Mont Valérien. The founders stipulated that a certain number of prayers should be said by the recluses of Mont Valérien before Mass, and before Benediction every evening. This is recorded on the tomb of Guillemette Faussard, as is also the fact that other recluses followed her.

She seems to have been the only hermitess on the mount. The recluses who followed her were men, and in the sixteenth and before the middle of the seventeenth centuries they formed themselves into a community, which was still in existence when Le Boeuf wrote in 1757. These hermits all had the same superior, who examined them as to their vocation, received them and gave them the habit of hermits, and without his permission they could not undertake any extraordinary penances. They followed a rule made by M. Hebert, the Penitencier of Paris, who died in 1638. They led a very penitent life, they ate only vegetables, they worked on the land, they wore a poor and rough habit, they kept perpetual silence, and spent a great part of their time in prayer. Each hermit had his own cell, but they heard Mass in the chapel, and here, too, they recited their Office at the prescribed hours. They were all laymen; they took no vows, but were free to leave when they liked. At Easter they used to go to Nanterre to make their Easter

until their chapel was consecrated in 1635, and after that they made it there. On the occasion of the consecration of this chapel there was a procession of hermits and others, all carrying tapers, to a place near it, where three crosses representing a Calvary were erected.

In the year 1735 there were eleven or twelve of these hermits living under the Archbishop of Paris as their superior.¹

¹ Le Boeuf's *Histoire de Paris*, Vol. VII., pp. 128-134.

CHAPTER XII.

ITALIAN ANCHORESSES.

*SS. Teuteria and Tusca—St. Galla—St. Benedicta—
St. Herondine—St. Redempte—St. Romula—St.
Silvia—Buona and Lucy—St. Rosalia—St.
Viridiana—St. Rose of Viterbo—B. Justina—
Sibillina—Julia della Réna—B. Gemma—Catherine
de Palenza—Catherine de Cardone.*

THE anchoretic life among women appears to have flourished in Italy more in the sixth century, when we find five or six canonised recluses, than in the following centuries, when it seems to have declined, until in the twelfth century we have the Murate, of whom we have already spoken, but at no time was it so popular in Italy as in France and Germany. In the twelfth century there seems to have been a revival of it, and in the fourteenth and fifteenth, and even as late as the sixteenth centuries, we have found at least one celebrated Italian anchoress.

SS. TEUTERIA AND TUSCA (A.D. 226).

Teuteria was born in England, but of heathen parents. She learnt the doctrines of the Catholic faith and received

Baptism with much devotion, and afterwards increased daily in all Christian virtues. She was greatly admired by Oswald, then King of England, who endeavoured to persuade her to live a dishonourable life with him, but she, being warned by God, left this country and went to Verona.

At Verona she heard of Tusca, sister to the bishop of that place, who was then living a solitary life in a certain cell in a desert place not far outside the old walls of the city. Teuteria often visited this recluse, and having found an opportunity she entered her cell one day, but not without a miracle. She had been warned that the king had sent some of his satellites to capture her, and that they were in the neighbourhood, so she implored Tusca to hide her, and having got in through the window it was covered with cobwebs, so that when the king's servants reached the spot there was no sign of the window having been recently opened. Deceived by its appearance, they returned to England, and Tusca, seeing that a miracle had been performed, allowed Teuteria to spend the rest of her life with her in this cell.

Teuteria venerated Tusca as her spiritual mother, and obeyed her in all things. She offered all her prayers and good works for the conversion of Oswald, and both these holy women served God day and night in vigils, fasts, and prayers.

Later Teuteria was seized with a severe illness, and received the last Sacraments. Her last words were "Into Thy hands, O Lord, do I commend my spirit," and, as her learned biographer says, "the angels stand-

ing by, she departed to God." She was buried in the cell, and Tusca, who died happily in the same year, was also buried there, and a church was built on the spot in their honour.

Many years after their deaths, in 751, the Bishop of Verona consecrated it and placed their bodies in a marble tomb. St. Teuteria is honoured on the 5th of May.¹

ST. GALLA (*6th Century*).

St. Galla was the daughter of a Roman nobleman named Symmachus. She was married very young, and became a widow a year after her marriage, and then renounced the world, gave up her fortune to the poor, and consecrated herself entirely to God. She had a cell built on the Vatican hill near the tomb of the holy apostles, and there retired to give herself entirely to prayer and mortification, for which she had a great attraction. The severe life she led destroyed her health, and during the last years of her life she suffered terribly from a cancer, but bore her pains without murmuring. She died about the middle of the sixth century, and was buried at Rome.²

ST. BENEDICTA.

St. Bénoite or Benedicta was a contemporary and a friend of St. Galla. She consecrated herself to God by a vow of virginity, and when St. Galla became a recluse St. Benedicta followed her example, and passed

¹ *Boll.*, Maij II., p. 46.

² Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 1133.

several years on the Vatican hill in prayer, alms, mortification, and penance. She had a great devotion to St. Peter, who revealed to her that her death would take place, as it actually did, a month after St. Galla's. She is mentioned for her piety by St. Gregory the Great.¹

ST. HERONDINE (6th Century).

St. Herondine, or Herundo, was a Roman virgin who, in the time of St. Gregory the Great, led an anchoritic life in the mountains near the town of Palestrina. She became the directress of St. Redempte, whom she initiated into the life of an anchoress. She lived in the sixth century, but little is known of her. She is mentioned in the Roman Martyrology on the 23rd of July.²

ST. REDEMPTE (A.D. 575).

St. Redempte, the disciple of St. Herondine, after being under her direction lived as a recluse in a house in Rome, near the church of St. Maria Maggiore, with St. Romula, who, although much younger than she was, predeceased her. She seems to have lived to a great age, for St. Gregory says that when he left the world in 575 she was then very old, and living with St. Romula. The date of her death is not known.³

ST. ROMULA (6th Century).

St. Romula, the third of these Roman virgins who followed the anchoritic life, is praised in one of the

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, p. 400.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 1330.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 864.

homilies of Gregory the Great for her progress in perfection. He says her obedience was admirable, that she kept perpetual silence, never speaking except in prayer. She lived for a long time with St. Redempte under her direction, but during the last years of her life she suffered from paralysis in all her limbs, and was completely bed-ridden and unable to move, but no complaint or murmur ever escaped her. Her only occupation was prayer.

One night she called St. Redempte to her, and when she, accompanied by another recluse who lived in the house, ran to St. Romula's assistance, they found her cell flooded with celestial light. Romula, seeing that they were frightened, told them she would not die just then; three days later she called them again during the night, and asked for the Holy Viaticum. After the ceremony, when Redempte and her companion left her, they heard before the door of the house two choirs singing psalms alternately; during this heavenly music St. Romula passed away. The date of her death is unrecorded, but it must have been in the latter part of the sixth century.¹

ST. SILVIA (6th Century).²

St. Silvia was the mother of St. Gregory the Great, and when her husband, who was a Roman senator, became an ecclesiastic, she left the world and shut herself up in a little oratory near the Church of St. Paul, and here passed the rest of her life occupied in prayer

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 1014.

and good works. The date of her death is unknown, but it took place in Rome before the end of the sixth century.

BUONA AND LUCY (13th Century).

In St. Dominic's time, among the Murate¹ whom he visited two suffered from incurable and most terrible diseases, brought on by the severe life they led. One of these was named Buona, who lived in a tower near the gate of St. John Lateran. The other, whose name was Lucy, was enclosed in a little cell behind the Church of St. Anastasia in Rome.

Both these recluses were miraculously healed of their diseases by St. Dominic after receiving from him the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion through the windows of their cells and being blessed by him. When the recluse Lucy was healed, Brother Bertrand, O.P., was present, and attested the miracle.²

ST. ROSALIA (12th Century).

St. Rosalia was a Sicilian. She was the daughter of Sinibald, Lord of Roses, and Quisquina, and was born at Palermo at the beginning of the twelfth century. She lived in a cave on Mount Pellegrino, about three miles from Palermo, whither she retired in her youth, and passed her days in severe penance, prayer, and manual work in constant union with our Lord. She died in 1160.³

¹ See *supra*, p. 6.

² *History of St. Dominic*, p. 209, by Miss Drane.

³ *Aurêole Séraphique*, by the Rev. Father Léon.

In 1625 her body was found buried in a grotto, and under Pope Urban VIII. it was moved to Palermo, where it was re-interred in the principal church and St. Rosalia chosen as its patroness. A pestilence was raging at the time, which ceased under her patronage, and by the inhabitants this was ascribed to her intercession.¹

ST. VIRIDIANA (1182-1221).²

In the Franciscan breviary this saint, who was raised to the altar in 1533 by Pope Clement VII., is only called Blessed, but in the diocese of Florence she is spoken of in the Office as Saint Viridiana.

She was born in 1182 at Castelfiorentino, not far from Siena; her parents, named Attavanti, were poor but of noble birth. She fasted, watched, wore a chain and a hair shirt even as a child. When she was twelve years old she left her home to go and keep house for her uncle.

Later, she made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James of Compostella, and on her return to Castelfiorentino refused to remain there, as requested by the inhabitants, who had heard of her sanctity, to do, unless she were allowed to be a recluse. While her cell was being built, she made another pilgrimage, to Rome this time. The cell was situated on the banks of the river Elsa, at the foot of the town, close to a small oratory dedicated to St. Anthony. It was ten feet long by

¹ *Lives of the Saints and Blessed of the Third Order of St. Francis* (translated from *Aurèle Séraphique*, Taunton, 1885).

² *Ibid.* (This account is abridged from this work.)

three and a half wide, and was made of brick. The only opening after the entrance was closed was a small window, still to be seen, looking towards the chapel of St. Anthony. Here she assisted at Mass, received the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, and through this window her food was passed.

The cell contained no furniture, only a ledge in the wall, a foot wide, as a seat, and in this living tomb, little bigger than a grave, she lived for thirty-four years. The ceremony of enclosing her was performed after Mass and Holy Communion by her director, a collegiate canon, in the parish church, where she received the habit of a recluse. A large crucifix was then given to her, which she clasped to her heart, and, kissing it, carried it to the cell, followed by the clergy and the people. At the entrance to her cell she turned and bade good-bye to the weeping throng, who all exclaimed, "Blessed be thou, Viridiana, true servant of God; pray for us sinners who implore thy intercession."¹ Viridiana, clasping her crucifix, then entered the cell, which was immediately walled up. She slept on the ground in summer, in winter on a plank with a piece of wood for a pillow; she wore an iron girdle and a hair shirt; she had but one meal a day, at sunset, and this consisted generally of bread and water, sometimes of beans boiled in water; she gave away most of the food which was given to her to the poor, who came to her cell every evening for it. She received no other visitors but the poor and afflicted, and at some seasons she did not open her window to take

¹ *Lives of the Saints and Blessed of the Third Order of St. Francis.*

in her food for days. Once a week the canon who directed her came to hear her confession.

She offered all her mortifications for the conversion of sinners. Many miracles are recorded of her, and many were wrought through her after her death, which took place on the 1st of February, 1242; her feast is kept on the 13th of that month. The hour of her death was revealed to her, and she sent for her confessor and then closed her window, and was heard singing the penitential psalms. At the moment of her death the church-bells of the neighbourhood began ringing of themselves; the chapter and principal people of the town went to Viridiana's cell and ordered the wall to be opened, when she was found dead on her knees, her psalter open at the Miserere.

For thirty years two snakes lived with her and shared her food, and it is said sometimes lashed her with their tails till she became insensible. For a long time this was kept secret, but the Bishop of Florence heard of it and visited her every year afterwards. She begged him not to have the snakes destroyed, as she told him they were sent in answer to her prayer that a similar trial might be vouchsafed her to that of St. Anthony, who was tormented by devils in the shape of wild beasts. Shortly before Viridiana's death one of these snakes was killed, and the other never returned to her cell.

In the year 1221 she was visited by St. Francis of Assisi, who received her into the Order of Penance. She also belonged to the Order of Vallombrosa.

ST. ROSE OF VITERBO (A.D. 1252).

St. Rose of Viterbo was born of pious parents, and gave signs of remarkable piety from her earliest childhood. She afflicted her body with hair-cloth, fasting, and other kinds of austerities, and gave herself up to a life of Divine contemplation. She was most charitable to the poor, and would deny herself food to carry it to them secretly. On one occasion she was carrying a basket of provisions to some poor people, when she met her father, who ordered her to show him what was in her basket, and, on uncovering it, the contents were found to be roses.

As a child the desire of solitude in her was so strong that she chose a narrow cell in her father's house in which she voluntarily shut herself up as in a prison, and spent her time in prayer and mortification, and particularly in intercession for the peace of the Church, which was just then much vexed and disturbed by the wickedness of the Emperor Frederick II.

Her mortifications brought on an illness, in which our Lady appeared to her and ordered her to become a Franciscan tertiary. Inspired by God, she converted by her pious exhortations many heretics to the faith, for which cause she was banished to the next town, where she prophesied the death of Frederick and the peace of the Church.

She then sought admittance into the convent of Our Lady of Roses, but the nuns refused to receive her on account of her poverty, so she returned to her father's

house, to the cell in which she had previously been enclosed, and remained in it for two years, practising the most severe penance, and giving herself up to a life of contemplation. She died in 1252, in the eighteenth year of her life.¹

Six centuries later, the same convent that refused to admit her as a subject when living, showed her body enshrined incorrupt in their church.²

B. JUSTINA (d. 1319).

B. Justina was born in Arezzo, in Tuscany. When she was thirteen years old she entered the monastery there of St. Mark, and a beautiful legend says as she was going in a white dove flew round her head, and was seen by many people who were standing by. She lived here serving God for four years, when, the neighbourhood being infested with robbers, the nuns were obliged to move to the convent of All Saints, whither Justina accompanied them, and there lived for many years in great sanctity.

She, however, aspired to a higher life, and asked and obtained permission to live in a certain cell not far from the castle of Civitella, where a certain holy old woman named Lucia was living as a recluse. The roof of this cell was so low that they could not stand upright in it, and was made so in order that they might oftener be on their knees in constant prayer. Here they lived in continual prayer and fasting, wearing hair-cloth, and practising austerities.

¹ From the Lessons in *Dominican Breviary*.

² Migne, Vol. II., p. 1000.

Lucia was ill and oppressed with many infirmities through age; Justina ministered to her day and night in unceasing watching and praying until she died and Justina was left alone.¹ At night she was molested by wolves, who climbed on the roof of the cell. In her simplicity she took them for wicked spirits, and on that account, now she was alone, she was much frightened by them. One night as she was trembling in her cell there appeared to her some one in the habit of a pilgrim who told her to be afraid of nothing, as Christ would always be her help. And so, strengthened by the words of the stranger, she obeyed, and remained in the cell fasting, praying, and watching for some time alone.

There were then living some of the "Murate"² near the Church of St. Antonia, and as she continued to suffer from fear she joined them, and then studied with all her mind to serve God as she was accustomed to do, in fasting, praying, and in austerities, giving all she had to the poor. She and the other "Murate" were annoyed by thieves and other wicked persons so much that they were obliged to move to some other cells which a certain doctor named Bencasa had built for them in a wall, and here Justina passed the rest of her life. She fasted continually, and kept silence and wore hair-cloth and a rough iron chain, which she tied so tightly round her that it is said in her life she looked to have two bodies instead of one.³

She was oppressed with great bodily infirmities, but

¹ *Boll.*, Mar. II., p. 238.

² See *supra*, p. 6.

³ *Boll.*, Mar. II., p. 239.

nevertheless she prayed to God to deprive her of her sight, which prayer was granted, and she became totally blind. She bore this and her other afflictions with so much patience that she never said an angry word to her sisters, that is the other "Murate," but praised God in adversity as in prosperity.

She spent from midnight to mid-day in prayer and silence, and nothing kept her from this practice. Many miracles are told of her. One day when the other "Murate" were angry because they had no bread, she told them not to doubt, as God would provide for them, and immediately after someone knocked at the window and a basket of white bread was found at the window by the sister who hastened to open it.

To incite the other "Murate" to continual prayer, she told them that she wished to relate to them what happened to herself, namely, that a voice often spoke to her in the night saying, "Rise, Justina, the beloved of God are accustomed to rise now for prayer," and so she hastened to arise. One of the "Murate" looking in the direction of Justina's cell one night saw it filled with a light of great splendour.¹ After her blindness came upon her, if Justina wept, blood instead of tears came from her eyes, but she bore all her increasing maladies with the greatest patience.

When her end drew near she said her hours, and then, raising her face to heaven, said devoutly, "Lord, receive my soul and my spirit," and with these words on her lips she departed. She had lived enclosed in these

¹ *Boll.*, Mar. II., p. 239.

various cells for forty-nine years, and had been blind for twenty years. She died in 1319, and many miracles are recorded through her intercession after her death.¹

B. SIBILLINA OF PAVIA (1287-1367).

B. Sibillina was born in the city of Pavia of honourable parents. Her father was named Humbert de Biscossi, and her mother was Honoré, *née* de Vezzi. When she was twelve years old she lost her sight,² and from that time she gave herself up to the more diligent exercise of all the virtues. At fifteen she was received into the Third Order of St. Dominic, having already been instructed by the nuns in what way to make her prayer and meditation. The desire of a more austere life caused her to retire into a cell, which was built for her attached to the Dominican Church in that city.

This Church of the Friars Preachers was dedicated to San Tomaso, and here she was enclosed with a companion, a sister of the same Order, who only lived for two or three years. After her death, B. Sibillina remained enclosed alone in this little cell, which had only one window where she could speak with any one who came to visit her or receive spiritual consolation or to give any help in her temporal wants. At this window also was daily placed a little bread for her food.³

In this solitude she passed her days and nights in contemplation and meditation on the passion of our Lord, her soul penetrated with the most sweet and

¹ *Boll.*, Mar. II., p. 240.

² *Dominican Breviary.*

³ Marchese, *Sacro Diario Dominicano*, Vol. II., pp. 71-73.

tender devotion to His sufferings. She afflicted herself with the most rigorous penances that she might be conformed to her suffering Spouse. She was accustomed to eat the hardest bread, she daily took such sharp disciplines that the blood dropped to the ground, and she only allowed her tired limbs a little repose, which she took on a wooden plank, when worn with prayers, prostrations, and vigils.

She never wasted any time in vain conversation, but so edified all those that came to her cell with her speech, which turned continually on heavenly things, that they went away spiritually refreshed and incited to a higher life. She was very solicitous for the spiritual welfare of her neighbours, and of those who came to visit her she spoke to some of the mercy of God, to others of His justice, and led them to penance.

Although not well educated, B. Sibillina appeared to be wonderfully learned in theological matters, and she spoke with such facility and propriety on mystical subjects that she seemed to be miraculously versed in the "Soliloquies of St. Augustine" and the "Meditations of St. Bernard."

She remained enclosed in this cell for sixty-four or sixty-five years, and never left it but twice, once to communicate and the other time out of obedience to visit a nun in the monastery of Giosofat.¹

She died on the 19th of March, 1367, aged eighty, fortified with all the rites of Holy Church. Her body was taken to the church of the Friars Preachers, where

¹ Marchese.

many signs of her holiness were manifested to the crowds who visited it, and from this they began to show her public veneration, which has been persevered in by the people of Pavia and elsewhere to the present day.

Pius IX. confirmed her veneration, and granted permission to the Dominican order to celebrate her feast with a special Office and Mass.

B. JULIA DELLA RÉNA (*14th Century*).

Blessed Julia della Réna was born at Certaldo, in Tuscany, in the beginning of the fourteenth century. Her family belonged to the nobility, but, in spite of her rank, in her desire to lead an obscure life, she determined to go into service at Florence, but afterwards, fearing that the claims of her master, whose name was Tinolfi, might interfere with her duty to God, she took the habit of St. Augustine, such as recluses at that time wore, and went back to Certaldo.

On her return she saved a child from being burnt to death, and restored it safe and sound to its parents, which, added to her former reputation for sanctity, brought her so much human praise that she resolved to leave the world entirely and shut herself up in a little cell near the sacristy of the parish church of St. Michel. She lived there for thirty years, leading a life of severe penance, in close union with God, from Whom she received great consolation and extraordinary graces. She cared so little for the things of this world that her only food was the crusts of bread which the school children gave her as they passed her window.

She died in 1367, and was found by the clergy and people of Certaldo dead on her knees in her cell. Devotion to her was approved by Pius VII. in 1821.¹

B. GEMMA (1364-1429).

Blessed Gemma was a recluse in Sulmone, a town in central Italy. She was born in a little village at the foot of a mountain called St. Sebastian. Her father is described as a man poor in this world's goods, but rich in virtue. He gave his daughter the name of Gemma at her baptism.

He moved from St. Sebastian with his little family, whom he supported by feeding a few sheep and pigs, to another village in the Apennines, distant about five Roman miles. Here Gemma grew in years and in grace. Her parents, after the custom of the country, employed her in feeding the flocks, which she did willingly, praying devoutly to God, Whom alone she sought to please. She often had to wander with her sheep into unfrequented places, but she employed all her leisure moments in prayer.

This kind of life exposed her to many dangers, from which no watchfulness on her part could altogether save her, and when she was twelve years old her master sent his servants to snatch her from her flocks, he having been captivated by her beauty. Finding herself placed in his power, she told him she wished to consecrate herself entirely to God, and spoke so eloquently to him that she persuaded him to become her guardian, and he

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 170.

promised that he would build a cell for her at the church of St. John the Baptist, with a little window in it looking into the church and furnished with an iron grating.

Here Gemma was enclosed, and began to lead a solitary life, living on any little food supplied to her by the charity of the faithful, whom she repaid by fervent exhortations to love God and to avoid everything displeasing to Him. She lived enclosed in this cell for forty-two years. When she was fifty-five she was seized with severe illness, but bravely faced death, and asked for the last Sacraments; having received them, she knelt on the ground, and thus gave up her spirit to God about the year 1429.

It was the custom in those days to ring the church-bells to summon the people to the funeral when any one died. The death of Gemma was first known by a mysterious ringing of these bells, and when the villagers assembled at the church her corpse was found kneeling in the act of prayer in her cell.

They buried her in her cell after the customary ceremonies had been performed. Her sanctity was confirmed by frequent answers to prayer gained through invoking her; moreover, when her tomb was opened the following year by the Bishop, her body was found incorrupt. This Bishop was a very prudent and holy man, and he transferred it to the church which was built in her honour.¹

ST. CATHERINE DE PALENZA (*d.* 1478).

Catherine de Palenza was an Italian girl, born in the

¹ *Boll.*, Maij III., p. 180.

city from which she takes her name ; it is in the diocese of Novara ; but on the death of her parents, while she was still quite young, she went to Milan to live with her godmother, who brought her up piously. On her death Catherine desired to become a nun, but she was obliged to remain in the world as her guardian refused his consent.

In 1452 she heard a sermon in Milan on the Passion, by B. Albert of Sarzane, a Franciscan friar, which made such an impression upon her that she took a vow of chastity and retreated to Mount Varese, north of Milan, where she joined several other women who were leading an anchoritic life there near the church of Our Lady. It was a wild barren spot, and the only shelter was a few huts, in one of which Catherine made her hermitage. She spent the first six years of her solitary life in marvellous austerities. Her fasts were so rigorous that she took only enough food to keep her alive, and with that little she mixed ashes ; three times a day she scourged herself to blood ; for seventeen years she wore a hair shirt, and she only allowed herself a little sleep when nature was exhausted.¹

She had a great devotion to the sufferings of our Lord, and daily read St. John's account of the Passion. She was chosen superior of the other recluses on account of her holiness, and the fame of her sanctity attracted others to gather round her and place themselves under her guidance. They became so attached to her, and she had such power to convert sinners, that they too

¹ Migne, Vol. I., pp. 539-541.

resolved not to return to the world, but as they belonged to no religious order, evil report suggested that they were excommunicated.

At first Catherine bore this calumny patiently, and then she set herself to remove it by petitioning the Holy See to let them take solemn vows. The Pope Sixtus IV. consented to this, and ordered the Archbishop of Milan to change the hermitages of Mont Varese into a monastery, of which Catherine was made Superior. She adopted the Augustinian rule, and edified her subjects during the twenty months she was spared to rule them by her sanctity. She died on April 6th, 1478, and in consequence of the miracles worked by her intercession devotion to her was approved by Clement XIV. in 1769.¹

CATHERINE DE CARDONE (1519-1577).

Catherine de Cardone was born in Naples in 1519, and belonged to an old distinguished Neapolitan family. She might have played a brilliant part in society, but she soon wearied of the world, and consecrated herself to God by a vow of virginity. She had a great attraction for remarkable austerities, which won the admiration of all who knew her. In 1560 Philip II. of Spain summoned her to his court to undertake the education of his son Don Carlos, but she found court life so distasteful, and she had so little hope of ever correcting the vicious propensities of her pupil, that she gave up her post as governess to the prince at the end of seven years, and, leaving the court, hid herself in an unknown retreat.

¹ Migne, Vol. I., pp. 540-541.

Here she followed the austere life of the ancient anchorites; she slept on the bare earth, and for food contented herself with wild herbs. She wore a tunic of horse-hair in which were woven pieces of iron which ate into her flesh. She remained thus hidden from the eyes of men for three years, when she was discovered by a shepherd, whereupon the inhabitants of the place crowded to her retreat; but to escape from their veneration she accepted a shelter offered her by the Discalced Carmelites, who made her a grotto inside their monastery which was close by. Here she passed the last seven years of her life, and died at the age of 58 in 1577. St. Theresa spoke of her as a great saint, and although she has not been formally beatified, she is invoked in Spain by the faithful, and her feast is kept on the 12th of May.¹

¹ From Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 545.

CHAPTER XIII.

GERMAN AND SWISS ANCHORESSES.

St. Wiborado—Cilia : a False anchoress—The Recluses of St. Gall [1. Bachilde ; 2. Kevenina ; 3. Kerhilde ; 4. Udalgatha ; 5. Diemutha ; 6. Cotelinde ; 7. Cotestina] — St. Liutbirga — Reginlinde — St. Rachilde—B. Richilde—Diemoth—Ava—St. Helmutrude — Kerburga — Emoza — B. Herluka — B. Hazeka—B. Jutte—St. Mechtilde—Dorothea von Montau—V. Wilburgis—Kunegunde—Dankburch—Wezala—St. Paulina—Werntrude—Adelheid—Canoness Charitas—Ida—Drutlindes—Woyslava.

ST. WIBORADO (9th Century).

THIS saint, a virgin and martyr, as well as a recluse, was born in the ninth century, and belonged to an old Swabian family. She is known in France as St. Guiborat, and her Latin name is Viborata. From her earliest youth she showed signs of the holiness at which she afterwards arrived. Her parents were pious, and so far from putting any obstacles in her way, allowed her to consecrate her virginity to God and to follow her attraction for devotional exercises.

She had a brother named Hilton, and when he was ordained priest she went to live with him in order to lead a stricter and more retired life, and have more time for prayer and works of charity. The brother and sister emulated each other in advancing in the path of perfection, and they made together a pilgrimage to Rome to visit the tomb of the holy apostles.

On their return Wiborado incited her brother to leave the world and become a monk in the abbey of St. Gall. She remained a few years longer in the world, edifying her acquaintances by her penitence and austerities until, as she was accompanying the Bishop of Constanz to the abbey of St. Gall, she stopped on a neighbouring mountain and established herself in a cell near the church of St. George.¹ She was, however, unable to remain here, as she had so many visitors, so she determined to move to another place and be solemnly enclosed. The cell she then chose was within the territory of the monastery of St. Gall, near the church of St. Magnus; this Salomon, the Bishop of Constanz, blessed, and then performed the ceremony of enclosure.

She soon became famous for her gifts of prophecy and of working miracles. Among other things she healed St. Rachilde of an incurable disease, in gratitude for which favour Rachilde also embraced the anchoritic life and joined Wiborado, who instructed her in the contemplative life. They were joined by a third companion Wendilgarde, grand-daughter of Henry, King of Germany, and the wife of a nobleman named Uldaric,

¹ See Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. I., p. 1274.

but at the time she believed her husband to have been killed in the war then raging with the Huns, and thought she was a widow. It afterwards turned out that Uldaric was not dead, but only a prisoner, and on his release he returned to Switzerland and sought his wife, whom he desired should go back to him. The bishops assembled and held a synod, at which they decided that under the circumstances Wendilgarde's religious vows ought not to hinder her from returning to her husband, which she did.

Two servants of Wiborado are mentioned in her life,¹ Kebini and Bertherada; probably they lived with her at this time.

Later the Huns resumed their incursions into Switzerland, and Wiborado was advised to flee from her retreat at their approach; but this she refused to do, and when the Huns invaded her cell they were so angry at finding no money or valuables in it that they murdered her by striking her three times on the head with an axe. She suffered martyrdom on the 2nd of May, 924. She was buried in the church of St. Magnus. Her life was first written by Hartmann before 958, afterwards by Ekkhard.

CILIA: A FALSE ANCHORESS (10th Century).

We read a good deal about Cilia, who was a false anchoress, in the life of St. Wiborado, who visited her before she became a recluse herself and regarded her as her spiritual mother. Cilia was then a recluse at Con-

¹ *Boll.*, Maij II., p. 303.

stanz at the beginning of the tenth century, but, as the learned Bollandist says, "she was a recluse in body, not in the spirit, since she never mortified in herself the love of money, which is the root of all evil."

Wiborado went to her cell, and, having asked that out of the treasure of her heart she might be found worthy to speak a good word, Cilia not only promised to grant her petition, but on another day sent for her, and Wiborado, greatly rejoicing that her promise was about to be fulfilled, after mutual salutations when the window had been opened, thus began:—

"My sister, you are clad outwardly in sheep's clothing, but it is our duty, as the Apostle says, to prove the spirit, whether it be of God. Obedience without hesitation is the first degree of humility, and without this no one can serve God worthily, and it is preferred to sacrifice. By this command I wish to prove you."

And offering Cilia a little box with coins in it, she said, "Receive this money, dear sister, given to me as alms from the rich people of the town, which I have kept till now, and give it to the Church, when you shall receive it again with usury."

Cilia being exceedingly astonished replied, "The prophet enquiring about the perfection of dwelling in the house of God did not receive such a precept as that. I have never acted in this way, such a business is more known to usurers; commit this matter to them."

Wiborado, however, read her intention, and replying, "Believe me, your conversation is useless without obedience," they parted.

But Cilia, swelling with envy against Wiborado, and fearing her own reputation would decrease if the holy virgin remained longer in Constance, she sent to Salomon, the Bishop, and begged him to come and see her privately. He came, and after discussing other matters Cilia told him such scandal of Wiborado that he agreed to remove her to Einthaugia, where she suggested he might place her in a certain convent where the tone of the nuns was exceedingly spiritual, and to which it was easy to remove her, where, safe from the vanities of the world, she could remain in the service of God.

The Bishop accordingly ordered a boat to be got ready, and sent a messenger to tell Wiborado to prepare to sail with him to the above-mentioned island. Wiborado, however, before she went with the messenger, entered the church and prostrated herself in prayer before a certain altar in honour of St. Gall, and prayed to be shown if this was the will of God for her. Here she had a vision, in which she was forbidden to go, and when she awoke she dismissed the Bishop's servant by a sign, refusing to utter a word. He sent another messenger, and yet another, and finding she remained silent, he immediately concluded something had been revealed to her, and pursued his own voyage and returned safely the same day.

As we saw in St. Wiborado's life, she ultimately became an anchoress, and was enclosed by the same Bishop, who discovered her real sanctity and Cilia's perfidy and hypocrisy, and after the course of some years he caused the latter to be turned out of her cell ;

her biographer adds, "far, I fear, from the favour of God."¹

THE RECLUSES OF ST. GALL.

In the tenth century many women, of the upper classes especially, were enclosed in the cells of St. George Magnus, in the territory of the celebrated monastery of St. Gall, and there led a strict penitential life.²

Many of these recluses buried themselves in the caves and hollows, and lived as hermits, and though their names are found in the necrology of St. Gall, most frequently little else is known of them. Mabillon says that many of these anchoresses were under the direction of the abbot of the nearest monastery. They disappeared about the middle of the twelfth century, when convents for women had extended over Switzerland.

BACHILDE.³

Bachilde was one of these recluses. She is mentioned by Bucelin and in the necrology of St. Gall as a recluse living in a cave in the neighbourhood of that monastery, where she sanctified her life in complete seclusion. Many of these recluses received the veil from the bishop. She is honoured by Bucelin on December 23rd.

KEBENINA.⁴

Kebenina, a disciple and servant of Wiborado's, is supposed to have come from the same place, Klingen.

¹ *Boll.*, Maij II., p. 303.

² *Helvetia Sancta Burgener*, Vol. II., p. 269.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 66.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I.

She accompanied Wiborado to Constanz and St. Gall, and lived with her as her maid. After Wiborado's death she served Rachilde, and redoubled her exercises of prayer and penance. She was commanded by Ekkhard to write the life of her late mistress Wiborado, of which she was an eye-witness. She had lost her memory and was therefore unable to do it, but she prayed to Wiborado, and, through her intercession, she recovered it, and wrote down all she remembered. So long as Wiborado and Rachilde were alive she was not bound to enclosure, but on Rachilde's death she became a true recluse. The date of her death is uncertain.

KERHILDE (952).¹

Kerhilde was a grand-daughter of Notker; she was a very quiet child and from her youth longed for the solitary life, which wish was granted her some years after the death of B. Rachilde. In 952 she received the veil on the feast of the Ascension, and on our Lady's Nativity the abbot enclosed her near the church of St. Magnus. She led a strict holy life, reached a very old age, and died holily, but the date of her death is not known.

UDALGARTHA.

Udalgartha was a recluse in a cell attached to St. George Magnus, but little else is known of her except that she was very pious, and her name is in the necrology of St. Gall and she is also mentioned as a recluse by

¹ *Helvetia Sancta Burgener*, Vol. I., p. 378.

Ildeson von Aix. Bucelin says of her: "At St. Gall's the memory is honoured of the venerable recluse Udalgartha, who out of love to Jesus Christ voluntarily lived in a cleft in the rock in the intention of constantly chastising her body until her spirit soared on high and she entered into possession of eternal life after a short space of time."¹

DIEMUTHA.

Diemutha, or the "humble," lived many years as a recluse hidden in a hole in a rock near the monastery of St. Gall. She fasted, prayed, and practised the severest mortifications, and died in the highest holiness.²

COTELINDE (1015).³

This is another of the recluses of St. Gall, but nothing is known of her beyond the mere fact that she died on August 15th, 1015, under Abbot Burkhard II., and Ekkhard placed a Latin epitaph on her tomb. This epitaph merely says that, having wept over her past days, when old she went to her heavenly Spouse, in Whom she had courageously buried herself alive.

COTESTINA (10th or 11th Century).

Nothing is known of Cotestina, who is merely mentioned by Bucelin on January 7th as a recluse of St. Gall. The records of St. Gall say, "We have many men and women in our necrology of whom we are able to say

¹ *Helvetia Sancta Burgener*, Vol. II., p. 269.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 141.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 66.

nothing, not even when and where they lived, only it is certain that in the tenth or eleventh century they did live near us as recluses, but they increased more and more, and out of them in the next century or so did the convents for women grow.”¹

ST. LIUTBIRGA (*9th Century*).

St. Liutbirga was of royal blood ; she was the daughter of a German prince named Hessi, and was enclosed by Bishop Theotgrimm of Halberstadt in a cave locally known as the horse-trap ; here she lived an anchoritic life for thirty years, and died between 857 and 870.²

Her life was written by an anonymous Benedictine about the tenth century, and edited by Bernhardo Pezio. Many anecdotes of her are recorded. We are there told that St. Ausgerus sent young girls of fit dispositions to her to be taught the Psalter and Church embroidery, and when she had thoroughly educated them he gave them permission to return to their homes.³

REGINLINDE (*d. 959*).

This royal recluse was the daughter of Eberhard I., Count of Zurichgau, and head of the house of Nellenburg. She was one of the richest princesses of her time, and was honoured at the court of Otto the Great as much as she was esteemed and loved by her people. She longed for a quieter life after her marriage, and

¹ *Helvetia Sancta Burgener*, Vol. I., p. 131.

² *Kirchen Lexikon*.

³ *Fabricius*, Vol. II., p. 822.

when her children were all provided for, and her property disposed of or the management of it placed in competent hands, she went to her abbey at Zurich as Abbess.

She did not find the rest she longed for here, the cares of this renowned abbey occupying most of her time; moreover, she suffered from a painful illness, and knowing the end of life could not be far off she wished to spend it in complete retirement. Some time before her son Adelreich had lived on the island of Ufenau as a recluse, but was now gone to the monastery of Einsiedeln, and Reginlinde determined to go to Ufenau, which, from its beautiful situation, its fruitfulness, quietness, and loneliness, was an ideal retreat for any one attracted to the solitary life.

In the year 952, four years after Adelreich had left it, Reginlinde went there in company with her court-chaplain and some servants. She had a dwelling-place built for her near the little church which was dedicated to St. Martin. This was so connected with the church that from her room she could by means of some wooden steps reach a little gallery opposite the altar, and from this place she was able daily to hear Mass.

The inhabitants of the district often came over to the island to hear Mass and to visit their princess, and so numerous were they that, after consulting with Conrad, the holy Bishop of Constanx, she decided to build and endow a parish church for Ufenau. She did not live to see the church, which was dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, finished.

After her death her son Adelreich was sent by the Abbot of Einsiedeln as parish priest to Ufenau, charged with the superintendence of the building of the church.

Adelreich and Reginlinde are both represented on the windows of this church; she is holding the model of the church in her hand as the foundress thereof.¹

ST. RACHILDE (d. 1011).

St. Rachilde was a Swiss recluse. She was of high birth, her parents belonging to a noble family in the territory of St. Gall, Switzerland. She was afflicted with a malady which was considered incurable, and her state excited the compassion of St. Wiborodo or Guiborat, who lived as a recluse in a cell near the abbey of St. Gall. St. Wiborodo or Guiborat invited Rachilde to go to her that she might console and nurse her, and, by her prayers, she obtained her cure, which was complete.

From gratitude to her benefactress Rachilde also embraced the life of a recluse, and remained with Wiborodo for several years, practising penitential exercises and engaged in prayer and contemplation, until in 925 the Hungarians invaded the country and murdered Wiborodo but spared Rachilde, who pursued the anchoritic life for twenty-one years. She died in 946, and was buried by the side of St. Wiborodo in the church of St. Magnus, which was close to their cell.²

Her cell was inhabited by recluses for over a hundred years; among others, one Bertha Perchterat died there

¹ *Helvetia Sancta Burgener*, Vol. II., pp. 198-203.

² From Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 850.

in 986, and an anchorite named Harther followed her and died in 1011. The cell was so narrow that he could not stand upright in it; he had a stone for a pillow.¹

B. RICHILDE (d. 1100).²

B. Richilde was a recluse at Hohenwarten, in the upper part of Bavaria. She was enclosed in a little sort of house in or near the Parthenon there, such as Rader, in "Bavaria Sancta," says recluses lived in at that time in many places as well as in towers or hidden in caves or enclosed in cells.

She lived here from 1074 in solitude and prayer, and died on September 10th, 1100, and was buried under the altar of SS. Peter and Paul. At present almost the whole of her body is preserved and venerated in a little chapel, which has been built in place of the cell in which she lived enclosed on the same spot; or it would be more correct to say the cell has been turned into a small chapel and her remains moved into it. She lived under the Benedictine rule,³ and is honoured on April the 3rd.

DIEMOTH (1060-1130).⁴

Diemoth, whose name means humility, from the German *Demuth*, was surnamed the "beautiful scribe," on account of her beautiful handwriting. She was of noble birth; her family lived in Bavaria or Swabia.

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon* (Wetzer and Welte), Vol. VI., p. 636.

² *Boll.*, April III., p. 650.

³ *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. III., p. 1722.

She was born in 1060 and was piously brought up. While quite young she entered a convent at Wessobrunn, standing on the place where St. John's Church was afterwards built. After a long and severe probation, she had herself enclosed in a cell by the church, a frequent custom of the time in which she lived, and here she passed many years as a strict recluse.

During these years she copied, in her beautiful handwriting, a number of books for the convent and for public worship. St. Herluka, then living in a convent at Epfach, was a great friend of Diemoth's, and they kept up a very edifying correspondence, but the letters, which were kept in the convent Bernried, whither Herluka was obliged to fly, were destroyed by the Swedes in the Thirty Years' War.

In spite of her delicate constitution and the mortifications she practised, Diemoth lived to a good old age, and died in 1130 and was buried in the old cathedral at Wessobrunn. In 1707, when the church was pulled down, the grave was opened, and Diemoth's remains found, marked by a slab of lead, near the bones of seven martyrs. Though her handwriting has been famous from her time till modern days, most of it has been lost.

AVA (*d.* 1127).

Contemporary with Diemoth was another recluse named Ava, who was also a famous poetess, and the oldest German poetess whose poems are still extant. She married, but afterwards, probably after her husband's death, she became a recluse at Gottweih, in Austria, and

died in 1127. She wrote a rhymed history of the Life of JESUS according to the Gospels, with an appendix on the Last Judgment and Anti-Christ. These are published in a volume of German poems of the eleventh and twelfth centuries by Diemel.¹

ST. HELMTRUDE (*10th or 11th Century*).

St. Helmtrude, or Helentrude, was born and brought up at Herse, on the Weser, in Saxony. She led a most holy life of special merit. She was enclosed at Iborg, in the diocese of Osnaburg, but all the nuns of Herse, where there was a priory, were witnesses of her sanctity, and at her tomb even now miracles often happen.

St. Cordula, formerly an Ursuline nun, appeared to her and commanded her to institute a feast in her honour, which was done by the nuns of Herse, to whom Helmtrude communicated the vision, and St. Cordula is honoured on October the 22nd.²

Bishop Imandus, of Paderborn, wrote St. Helmtrude's name in the martyrology at the Priory at Herse in the words "Commemoration of Hiltrude, servant of God, and recluse at Herse," on the 31st of May, on which day she is honoured.³

KERBURGA (*10th Century*).

Kerburga was a recluse at Lindau in the beginning of the tenth century.⁴ Little is known of her except

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. I., p. 1742.

² *Boll.*, Maij VII., p. 441.

³ *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 635.

she excited the envy of some nuns who conspired to cause her death, of which she seems to have been warned. This same monastery had become so lax that in the year 1043 the abbess Ivota was appointed to restore discipline.¹

That she was actually murdered seems almost certain, for although the facts are unknown, it is stated in the life of St. Wiborado that in one of her visions where she was forbidden to go to a certain place with Salomon, the bishop, she was told "if she did she would become inebriated with the blood of Kerburga, the recluse."² Unless Kerburga had died a violent death such an expression would hardly have been used.

EMOZA (10th Century).

Emoza, sometimes called Hizila or Lucila, was a recluse at St. Stephen's, Augsburg. She was a nun, and, on account of her sanctity, was chosen by St. Udalricus, Bishop of Augsburg, to found a congregation of nuns, canonesses of St. Augustine, of which she became the first abbess in 969. Little else is known of her except that she was enclosed in a cell attached to the church of St. Stephen's, in Augsburg. She is mentioned in the life of St. Udalricus, or Ulrich, in the "*Acta Sanctorum*."³

B. HERLUKA (11th and 12th Centuries—d. 1142).⁴

Herluka was born in Swabia, in Germany. She had a long and serious illness in her girlhood, but was converted on her convalescence; she then had a longer and

¹ *Boll.*, Maij II., p. 303.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, Jul. II., p. 115.

⁴ *Ibid.*, April II., p. 548, etc.

more severe illness, from which she also recovered, but was blind. After invoking St. Cyriacus, the martyr, she received the sight in one eye, and then began to pass her nights in prayer with Adelaide, a very holy woman, the wife of the Count Palatine, and to take care of poor children. She spent some years in this way, exercising herself in the spiritual life under some illustrious men as her spiritual directors, one of whom was William, abbot of the monastery of Bernried, and watching in prayer with Adelaide and other holy women at night.

She then went to Epfach, a solitary uncultivated place of great antiquity on the shore of the river Lyci, where the body of St. Wicterpus, an Augustinian monk and afterwards a bishop, rested under the altar in an oratory dedicated to Our Blessed Lady. Her former companions who had accompanied her would not remain with her, but returned to their homes. Herluka, however, who was frequently favoured with visions, was told by St. Wicterpus, who appeared to her, to remain at Epfach. William the Abbot also counselled her to stay, and she dwelt in this solitary place for thirty-six years. She was not alone; she received as a companion a poor woman named Douda, who was very pious, who, being sent to comfort the deserted Herluka, embraced her tenderly and bestowed on her with wonderful gentleness the affection of a mother and the title of daughter. Douda possessed her soul with so much patience that sometimes Herluka seemed to be the mistress, though she did not hesitate to reprove her spiritual daughter when necessary.

If Herluka desired to wear rougher clothing, Douda

rebuked her, and foretold that before her death she would modify her exterior mortifications, which actually happened.

It would seem that they were not enclosed at Epfach, or at any rate they had access to the church, for it is stated in Herluka's life that one day she returned from church shivering with cold, and looking troubled, and when she replied to Douda's question as to where she had been, "To church," Douda told her she did not believe it, for if she had been to church she would have returned with a sweeter expression as the fruit of her prayer. On another occasion St. Wicterpus appeared to Herluka, and corrected her for having sometimes entered the sanctuary, although only on very rare occasions and for the shortest time, being sent by one lady Hadwiga, so she was certainly not walled up. As a penance the saint told her to kneel and say three Paters before she entered the oratory.

Herluka was favoured with many visions. Our Lord Himself appeared to her. She was shown the torments of the lost and the joys of the blessed. St. Laurence frequently appeared to her, and one night he appeared to her and Douda, and told Herluka that her brother who was dead was in heaven.

She had the gift of winning souls to God. Among her converts was a very beautiful girl named Judith, daughter of one Rupert; she received the veil from Udalrico, Bishop of Padua, and died soon after. Another convert was her own niece Liutgard, who also died soon after taking the veil.

She lived at Epfach until the wickedness of the peasants forced her to leave, and she was driven away in a cart to Bernried, after being a hermitess in Epfach for thirty-six years. At Bernried she was enclosed near the Augustinian monastery, and there she died in 1142. She wished to be buried in the monastery, and her tomb stands in a conspicuous place in the middle of the church. This monastery, belonging to the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, was founded in honour of St. Martin, near the lake Wurmsee.

She is honoured on April 18th. Her life was written by her request by Paul, the priest of Bernried, three years after her death.¹

B. HAZEKA (*d.* 1261).

B. Hazeka lived enclosed in a cell near the Sichern Cistercian monastery at Schermbeke, not far from the river Lippia, in Westphalia, under obedience to the Cistercian rule, and wearing a Cistercian habit. A devout woman named Bertha, from one of the Rhenish provinces, lived with her as servant. Their daily food was supplied from the monastery. Hazeka here passed her life in much simplicity and great patience, spending her days in prayer and work for thirty-six years. We are not told what her work was, but probably it was Church embroidery for the monastery, for we learn that one day for her work and her servant's they received bad butter, which Sister Bertha could not and would not eat, but removed it. Hazeka knelt down and prayed that

¹ *Boll.*, April II., pp. 549-554.

the butter might be made eatable, and when they sat down to their meal at the narrow table, one on each side of it, they found the butter was as fresh as though churned that day.¹ There is something very natural in the indignation of the old servant at their labour being rewarded with rank butter, and we are told also that Hazeka worked as hard as was possible, so that Sister Bertha's anger was excusable, especially as she probably had shared Hazeka's lot out of devotion to her rather than because she was herself attracted to it.

Blessed Hazeka died in 1261; she appeared to a certain woman after her death and told her if she were invoked the prayers should be granted, and she is invoked by many people.

There was a dispute about her burial. At her death the lay brothers from Sichern Monastery went to fetch her body, but a certain black monk who was at that time saying Mass in Altaich would not permit them to have it, but, with the help of the townspeople, buried her on the third day after her death himself. The bishop, however, ordered the body to be exhumed and given to the monastery, which was done.

B. JUTTE OR JUDITTA (*d.* 1130).

B. Jutte was the sister of Meynard, Count of Spanheim. She left the world to become a nun, and, after taking the veil, lived at first as a recluse in a cell in the convent of the community to which she belonged, but the nuns at the beginning of the twelfth century elected her as their

¹ *Boll.*, Jan. III., p. 373.

superior, which office she accepted. She trained St. Hildegarde, who was a near relation confided to her care when only eight years old, and who eventually succeeded her as abbess. She died in 1130.¹

ST. MECHTILDE (b. 1102).²

Mechtilde was born at Spanheim in 1102, and was the sister of Bethelme, a holy monk who afterwards became Abbot of Spanheim. His example induced his sister to leave the world, and she placed herself under his guidance and shut herself up in a cell near his monastery. When Bethelme was elected abbot he had a hermitage built for her near his monastery, to which she moved, and there lived till she died at the age of fifty-two.

She passed her days and a great part of her nights, for she gave but little time to sleep, in prayer, reading Holy Scripture, and manual work. She fasted severely, eating only bread and vegetables boiled in water. Several other holy women, struck by her holy life, placed themselves under her guidance, and became her spiritual children; they all followed the Benedictine rule. Five names of the most fervent have come down to us—Demuth, Gerlinde, Luitgarde, Gertrude, and Blessed Sophia.

Mechtilde is honoured by many as a saint, and was much praised by St. Hildegarde, who knew her in her youth. At her death, which happened in 1154, many

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 199.

² From Migne's *Encyclopédie Théologique*, Vol. XLI., p. 472.

miracles took place. She was buried at Spanheim, in the church of St. Martin.

Blessed Sophia lived with her in her hermitage and shared her manner of living, practising similar austerities. She died about the middle of the twelfth century.¹

DOROTHEA VON MONTAU (1347-1394).

This celebrated recluse was the youngest of nine children, and was born in 1347 at the little village of Montau, near Marienwerder, in Prussia. She was richly endowed with spiritual gifts, and from her early childhood began to lead a life of unceasing communion with her Saviour, Whose sufferings she wished to share. She practised such severe austerities that her body is said to have been furrowed like a ploughed field with disciplines, and yet she edified everyone who knew her by her cheerfulness and gracious manners.

After the death of her father in 1357 she was the sole support of her mother, as her four sisters were married, and she laboured unweariedly, doing the hardest work, and also helping the poor, whom she taught psalms and spiritual songs. She married an old citizen of Danzig at seventeen by the will of her eldest brother. Her husband is described as a hasty-tempered, rough man, but of good will. She bore him nine children, and by her mildness and sweet disposition completely won him, so that he became the kindest and best of husbands, with whom she lived for twenty-six years.

All her children, except one daughter who became a

¹ From Migne's *Encyclopédie Théologique*, p. 1575.

Benedictine nun, died in youth, and after their deaths her husband sold his house and travelled with her to Cologne, Aix, and Einsiedeln, and was only prevented by the infirmities of age from going with her to Rome for the Jubilee of 1390; he, however, sent Dorothea in company of several pious friends, and died during her absence.

Even during his lifetime her enthusiastic love of God, which she could not hide, brought her the scorn and derision of men; she was once denounced as a heretic, but was acquitted of the charge. She had a very pious confessor in Danzig who at last yielded to her entreaties and allowed her to go to weekly Communion, but he would have nothing to do with her visions and her extraordinary spiritual experiences, which he did not understand, but sent her to the Dean of the Cathedral in Marienwerder, named Johann.

Dorothea proceeded to Marienwerder on foot, and there took up her abode with a poor widow, with whom she lived in the humblest way after having given away all her possessions. She then placed herself under obedience and the direction of the dean, and lived as a recluse in a cell attached to the cathedral.

Her food was simply one egg or a little beer-soup (*bier suppe*) for the whole day. Instead of sleep she was favoured with ecstasies; though quite simply clothed she was neither susceptible to the greatest cold nor to insupportable heat. Numbers came to the little window of her cell to consult her, and all went away consoled and edified. Her time was spent in prayer, sighs, and

tears, for the wants of the Church alternated with songs of praise for the mercy of God. She offered all her prayers and mortifications, not only for the whole Church, but also for the needs of those who came to seek her intercession.

After the death of the Grand Master Wallenrod, she was ordered by the bishop to pray for a new Grand Master, which she did, and prophesied a happy time under the future Prince Conrad von Jungingen, who verified her prediction. Numberless proofs were given of her insight into the souls of men, as well as into the hidden things of the present and the future. In her visions she saw many recluses of both sexes failing, and with great difficulty and peril living in the state of recluses.¹

She led this life till June 25th, 1394, when she died without any illness, purely out of longing for her Heavenly Bridegroom, in the 48th year of her age. Her death was universally regretted; even the Bishop went to her funeral, and the Dean Johann preached a panegyric on her extraordinary life which was so affecting that the congregation wept and sobbed. After her death it was found that wonderful answers to prayer followed on her intercession, and already many of her prophecies were fulfilled, so that people began to press for her canonization. This, however, never took place, though a protocol was made of her case, and the Dean arranged in three Latin volumes an account of the visions she had confided to him, extracts from which he eventually allowed to be

¹ Translated from *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. III., p. 1994.

translated into German, which did not appear in print till nearly a hundred years after her death.

It appears that the country was too impoverished by the plundering of the King of Poland to bear the cost of carrying her cause to Rome, but she was nevertheless honoured as a saint in Danzig, and looked upon as the patroness of the order of knights who had been most zealous in pressing for her canonization. The Protestant Reformation eventually put an end to her invocation and to the devotion to her, though she is still looked upon as a protecting saint of Prussia.

V. WILBURGIS (*d.* 1289).

The venerable Wilburgis, whose life has been written by Provost Einrich, lived as a recluse from 1248 to 1289 at St. Florian's, in Upper Austria.

KUNEGUNDE.

Under the Cistercian rule at Lilienfeld, in Lower Austria, Kunegunde lived as a recluse.

DANKBURCH (*12th Century*).

This recluse lived in a cell at Winikela, after having helped to found the convent of Johannisberg, in Rheingau, in the beginning of the twelfth century.

The following German recluses lived under the Benedictine rule in the eleventh and twelfth centuries:—¹

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI., p. 637.

WEZALA.

This recluse was of noble birth, and lived the anchoretic life at Chiemsee. She is described as Frau Wezala, so she was probably a widow. She died in 1135.

ST. PAULINA.

St. Paulina was the widow of Knight Udalrich, and was enclosed after his death in a cell called Pauline's cell after her near the church of the Benedictine convent founded by her in 1106. She died in 1107. She is called saint in the Benedictine hagiology, but not by the Bollandists.

WERNTRUDE.

The Countess Werntrude was enclosed in a cell at St. Alban's cloister, Mainz, in 1130.

ADELHEID.

In 1168 the widow Adelheid was enclosed in the same cell.

The following lived under the Augustinian rule:—¹

CANONESS CHARITAS.

This recluse was enclosed by Burchard, Bishop of Worms, in 1002, in St. Mary's Cathedral in that city.

IDA.

Ida was enclosed in a cell in the priory of St. Victor, Mayence.

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon.*

DRUTLINDES.

Drutlindes was enclosed in a cell in the church of St. Stephen's, Mayence.

WOYSLAVA (*d.* 1227).

Woyslava was the wife of Duke Otto of Cracow and the sister of Hroznata, a Premonstratensian monk. Hroznata founded a monastery at Chotinschau in honour of St. Wenceslaus, to which Woyslava afterwards gave her fortune, but she did not actually found it.

During her husband's lifetime, with his consent, they accustomed themselves to live in the state of widowhood, she in a Premonstratensian monastery as a recluse. When her brother founded Chotinschau, Woyslava went there, and although she was a Duchess and the sister of the founder, and indeed, as she enriched it with her fortune, she was almost the foundress, she was so humble that she passed her life among the lay sisters according to one account of her.¹ Another account says she lived as a recluse in this monastery as well as formerly in the Premonstratensian monastery.² Perhaps both reports are true, for the cell in which she was enclosed may have been in the lay sisters' quarters.

She died happily in 1227, and is honoured in Bohemia with the title of Blessed.

¹ *Boll.*, Jul. III., p. 797.

² *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI.

CHAPTER XIV.

BELGIAN AND DUTCH ANCHORESSES.

St. Ermelinda — St. Landrade — St. Rénelde — St. Waltrude — St. Hiltrude — St. Ivera — St. Christina Mirabilis — B. Juetta or Yvetta — Eva — The Recluse of Fosses — V. Berta — Jeanne de Cambry — Margaretha — Pirona Hergods.

ST. ERMELINDA.¹

ST. ERMELINDA was born near Louvain, in Brabant, of distinguished parentage; she was well and carefully educated, and from her twelfth year resolved to consecrate herself to God, to which end she made a vow of virginity and retired to a room near her mother's apartments to avoid the guests who visited her parents. She devoted herself to a life of contemplation, and set herself to learn the Psalter by heart. Her parents pressed her to marry, but she refused, cut off her hair in their presence, and declared she was betrothed to Christ. They eventually allowed her to follow the dictates of her heart, and sent her to one of their country houses to live in retirement.

¹ See *The Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*, p. 130; and Translated from the French (Migne), Vol. I., p. 875.

Ermelinda, however, fled from this luxurious house, and established herself near a small town named Bevee, where her wealth and rank were unknown. She only left the house to go to church, and always went there bare-foot, by day or night, in summer or winter. During her visits to the church she was observed by two young noblemen, who, unknown to each other, fell in love with her, and one of them determined to carry her off, and tried to bribe the porter of the church who opened it at night to admit Ermelinda for her devotions to assist him. The porter, however, warned the saint, who immediately fled and took refuge in a secluded place, then called Meldrick, now Meldraert, in the country of Brabant, and there lived on wild herbs for the remainder of her life, spending her days in prayer and severe mortifications.

ST. LANDRADE (*7th Century*).

St. Landrade lived at the end of the seventh century. She was a Belgian girl who, inspired by the example of one of her young friends named Eulalie, who left the world to become a nun, desired to give herself up to God. She refused several offers of marriage, and for some time lived shut up in a room in her mother's house, fasting on bread and water, but she desired a more severe life than this, so she retired to a lonely spot between Maestricht and Tongres. While here she built the little monastery of Belise and a church, which was dedicated to our Lady by the holy Bishop of Maestricht and martyr St. Lambert. A community gathered round Landrade and placed themselves under her guidance, and she ruled

them as abbess, practising all the virtues proper to the religious state, and edifying all by her example. She died at the end of the seventh century.¹

RÉNELDE (A.D. 680).

St. Rénelde, or Rameldis, was a martyr as well as a recluse in Brabant, and came of a family of saints, of whom the best known is St. Gudule, her sister, the patroness of Brussels. She was the daughter of Count Witgere and St. Amalberge, and sister to St. Emebert, Bishop of Arras.

She consecrated herself to God from her youth by a vow of perpetual chastity, and with St. Gudule lived the life of the cloister in the world, and when the latter became a nun in the monastery of Nivelles, Rénelde, who was under a vow to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, set out for Palestine, accompanied by a maid and a valet. She spent nearly seven years visiting the holy places, and on her return retired to Zanchte, where she had an estate which she had given to the monastery of Lobes. Here she shut herself up in a cell to live the life of a recluse, and divided her time between prayer, penitential exercises and charitable works, spending her large fortune on the poor and in founding convents, and living on barley-bread and water.

In or about 680 the Saxons invaded this part of the country, whereupon the inhabitants took flight, but Rénelde, with two other saints who would not abandon her, took refuge in the church of Zanchte, where they

¹ Migne, Vol. II., p. 211.

were found and murdered by the invaders. They were afterwards buried in the same church.¹

ST. WALTRUDE OR VAUDRU (*7th Century*).

St. Waltrude, whose name is sometimes corrupted to Vaudru, was the daughter of Count Valbert of Hainault and his wife St. Bertile; she was born in the beginning of the seventh century at the Castle of Coursoire. She married Count Mauger by the desire of her parents; he is honoured in the Church as St. Vincent of St. Oignies. They had four children, two sons (of whom one died young) and two daughters, all of whom are honoured as saints; the daughters, SS. Aldetrude and Madelberte, both became nuns and abbesses.

After the birth of these children Waltrude persuaded her husband to embrace the religious life and to allow her to do the same. He consented, and built the monastery of Hautmont, to which he retired in 654. Waltrude was under the direction of St. Guislan, who, after having led an eremitical life for some years in a forest on the borders of the river Aisne, had built a monastery called the monastery of Celle, and she was counselled by him to remain in the world a little longer until the convent was finished which a relation of hers, Count Hildulph, was building for her.

This building when finished was so magnificent that St. Waltrude thought it inconsistent with the humility of her desires, and it being destroyed by a storm the following night, Hildulph built a cell near it, into which

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 872.

Waltrude retired in 656 and received the veil from the Bishop of Cambria, afterwards St. Aubert. Other holy women gathered round her and she formed them into a community, which eventually became the canonesses of St. Vaudru, for whom a monastery was built at this same place, Castriloc, near Mons, which town owes its origin to the convent of Castriloc; the church there is dedicated to St. Vaudru. She was sometimes visited in her retreat by St. Aldegonde, her sister, the superioress of the convent of Mauberge, which she founded. St. Vaudru died in 686.¹

ST. HILTRUDE (*d.* 790).

St. Hiltrude was the daughter of Count Wibert, a French nobleman of Poitou, who left France and took up his abode in Belgium, where he built a monastery and church at Liessies. Her mother, Ada, was a noble French lady. They had also a learned and holy son named Guntrad, who became an abbot and also his sister's spiritual guide.

Hiltrude was a beautiful girl and very pious. Hugo, Prince of Burgundy, desired to marry her, but she refused him, having consecrated herself to Christ. She agreed, however, to marry him if she might live with him as his daughter instead of as his wife, and he consented to this, meaning to deceive her. She discovered in time his deceitful intention, and one stormy night she fled from her father's house into a wood close by, and there found a hiding-place.

¹ Migne's *Dictionnaire Hagiographique*, Vol. II., p. 1283.

The next day her parents heard of her flight, and were greatly distressed, fearing not only for her but also lest they should lose the friendship of the prince. Hiltrude, however, remained firm in her refusal, and finally Hugo consented to marry her sister Bertha instead of her.

Not many days later the Venerable Theodorico, Bishop of Cambria, gave her the veil and the religious habit. Hiltrude then retired into a cell near the church of Liessies near a monastery governed by her brother Guntrad, or Gontrad. Here she lived most piously, her learned biographer says like a second Anna in the temple, in constant fasting and unceasing prayer, both by night and day, seeking only how to please her Divine Spouse. No one ever heard a light word from her or saw her smile. She avoided all intercourse with people in the world, and received no visits except from her brother and spiritual guide Guntrad, with whom she conversed on the things of God.¹

After her prayers she read and meditated on the Bible, observing silence, and exercising herself in severe penance and exterior mortification. Several holy women placed themselves under her guidance, and she united them into a community. She lived enclosed in this cell for seventeen years.² It was in the north side of the chancel, near her brother's oratory. She died, it is believed, about 785 or 790³ in the odour of sanctity, and was buried in the church of Liessies, where her relics are kept.

¹ *Boll.*, Sep. VII., p. 488.

² Migne, Vol. I., p. 1355.

³ *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI., p. 640.

IVERA OR IVETTA (1200).

This recluse, called Ivera by Surius, Ivetta by some other writers, which is corrupted into Metta by others, is apt to be confused with Ivetta of Huy, who lived about the same time.

Ivera was a recluse at Loen, a village now called Léau, a mile and a half from St. Trudo, and about twenty-five miles from Huy-on-the-Maas, where Ivetta or Juetta was enclosed. Ivera was visited by Christina Mirabilis, who lived with her in her cell for nine years. Christina used to spend the nights in the church. How she got out of the cell we are not told, probably through the window, as she was an adept at climbing, and so extraordinary a being that windows and doors, bolts and bars were not obstacles to which she paid much attention.

It is from this Ivera, who was for nine years an eye-witness of St. Christina's miraculous performances, that the Dominican Friar Thomas of Cantimpré no doubt gathered some of the materials for her biography which he wrote, for we know he visited Ivera.

She is called saint by Mantelius in his history, but he does not know if any relics of her exist.¹

ST. CHRISTINA MIRABILIS (*d.* 1224).

St. Christina of Belgium was not an anchoress, nor can she even be called a recluse, though she lived for nine years with the recluse Ivetta, but she was so extraordinary a being that bolts and bars, ropes and chains

¹ *Boll.*, Jul. V., p. 637, *et seq.*

seem to have been of very little use in restraining her movements. But besides spending these nine years with Ivetta, she frequently lived in wildernesses and lonely places as a solitary, in order to abandon herself to a life of contemplation.

Her life was written eight years after her death by the Dominican Friar Thomas of Cantimpré, a pupil of Albert the Great, and he expressly says he has only quoted from such eye-witnesses of the remarkable phenomena connected with St. Christina which earned for her the name of *Mirabilis* as would have laid down their lives rather than say anything untruthful.¹ As it is recorded that her biographer visited the recluse Ivetta, we may reasonably suppose, Christina having lived with her nine years, she was one of his authorities; and the nuns of the convent of St. Catherine, near St. Trond, with whom she was on intimate terms, and who were well aware of her wonderful doings, were no doubt also consulted by him.

She was born in 1150 at the village of Burstem, near St. Trond, in the diocese and province of Liége. St. Trond is a very ancient city, and is named after St. Trudon, who built a monastery there, and Burstem was in 1417 the scene of a great battle between Charles the Bold and his rebellious subjects.

Her parents were honest people, but apparently in a humble position in life. They died when Christina was about fifteen, leaving her and two elder daughters orphans. After their parents' death the three sisters

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon* (Wetzer and Welte), Vol. III, p. 230.

divided the duties of life in a conventual way: one gave herself up to prayer, one to household duties, and to Christina fell the task of looking after the cattle in the fields, which, from humility, she gladly undertook.

In this lowly labour she was content to remain "unknown to others, known only to God," Who rewarded her humility by bestowing heavenly graces and favours and much spiritual sweetness upon her, so that Surius says that with the prophet Isaiah she could exclaim, "My secret to myself, my secret to myself."¹ The life of intense contemplation that she led told upon her health, and when she was seventeen she seems to have fallen into a trance; at any rate, her illness was so like death that she was taken to church to be buried, and during the Requiem Mass she rose from the bier, to the astonishment and terror of all present.

Her biographer relates that she hastened up to the wooden roof of the church like a bird, and remained there immovable until Mass being over the priest absolved her and commanded her to come down, all the congregation except her eldest sister, who was too terrified to move, having left the church from fear.²

Christina then related that she had seen while apparently dead, first the pains of Purgatory, then the horrors of Hell, and lastly the glories of Paradise, and that the choice had been given her of remaining in Heaven or of suffering on earth for the holy souls and for the conversion of sinners, and she had chosen the last.

From this time began the painful sufferings and

¹ Surius, Vol. II., p. 319.

² *Ibid.*, p. 320.

heavenly ecstasies, the extraordinary phenomena, and spiritual experiences, incredible at this distance of time, which earned for her in her own age the title of *Mirabilis*. She is said to have been so thin and light and agile that she could perch like a sparrow on the thinnest branches of trees, and she had an extraordinary facility for walking and standing on the highest and most inaccessible places,¹ such as the tops of trees and the pinnacles of towers and churches, and was often seen standing on the palings of hedges singing psalms, and still far more wonderful things are recorded of her.²

After the trance mentioned above, she shunned her fellow-creatures and delighted to live in wildernesses and to roam about in solitary places, so that her sisters and many other people believed her to be possessed by a devil, and they frequently caused her to be bound, even with chains, and imprisoned, but after enduring imprisonment she always managed to escape like a bird from a net. She was fed in a miraculous way when living in these lonely places, and often as a penance she chose to beg her necessary food.³ At last her sisters sent a man after her, with orders to bring her back in iron chains, and he being unable to catch her with his hands, cruelly broke one of her legs with a club, and then took her home. Her sisters sent her in a carriage to Liége, where the doctor, knowing her agility and her determined spirit, after setting and bandaging her leg, put her into a cell and bound her to a column, and then locked her up.⁴ When he was gone Christina, indignant

¹ Surius.² *Ibid.*³ *Kirchen Lexikon.*⁴ Surius.

at being treated by any physician except our Lord, in Whom she trusted to deliver her, tore off the splints and bandages, and in the night her bonds were loosed and her leg healed, and she was heard walking about the cell praising God.¹

After this her sisters, moved by pity for her sufferings, which were often very great, desisted from all attempt at controlling her, and gave her full liberty to do as she pleased. She now frequently visited the nuns of St. Catherine's convent, near St. Trond, and during her intercourse with them they were witnesses of her supernatural gifts.

Later on she went to the fortress-town of Loen, or Looz, probably the modern Léau, which is about a mile and a half from St. Trond. Here she lived for nine years with her friend Ivetta, a celebrated recluse. She used to rise to matins and go to the church, where she frequently spent the whole night alone after everyone had left, and it is said the most exquisite music was heard proceeding from the church on these occasions.

She understood Latin, and gave explanations of Holy Scripture, although she had not learnt either theology or Latin; she possessed the spirit of prophesy, and saw the most distant and hidden things. Count Ludwig of Loen had a great respect for her, and used to consult her and ask her advice, and called her mother.

She had a great reverence for clerics, especially for priests, whom for Christ's sake she venerated, and fre-

¹ Surius, Vol. II., p. 820.

quently suffered many injuries at their hands; she also secretly admonished sinful priests with great reverence.¹

After she left Ivetta towards the end of her wonderful life, she retreated again into the wilderness, where she wandered about alone, and gave herself to prayer and contemplation, and frequently had ecstasies. She sometimes returned to take food, looking, it is said, more like a spirit than a human being.

She died in the monastery of St. Catherine at St. Trond in 1224, but she woke up after she was supposed to be dead, and admonished the assembled nuns, then died and was buried. Seven years later, when the whole convent was removed, her remains were translated, and in 1249 her bones were carried into the church and buried near the altar.²

There is also a Christina von Stommeln, called by the Belgians the "Cologne Christina," who led a similar life to Christina Mirabilis,³ but as she does not appear to have been a recluse at any time of her life, we have not given an account of her.

B. JUETTA OR YVETTA (*d.* 1227).⁴

B. Juetta was born of rich parents at Huy-on-the-Maas, and from her youth was given to piety, disliked luxury, and had a taste for austerities. She is described as having a beautiful face, charming manners and a modest demeanour, with plenty of good sense and a very happy,

¹ Surius, Vol. II., p. 321.

² *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. III., p. 231.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Boll.*, Jan. II., pp. 145-169.

cheerful disposition which endeared her to all who knew her. When she was only thirteen, after the custom of the age and her country, her parents began to look out for a husband for her, and, against her inclinations, she in obedience to them accepted the man they selected for her.

She hated her married life, and was very unhappy in it as she had desired to consecrate herself entirely to our Lord ; moreover, she disliked her husband, and even wished for his death, though of this she afterwards repented. They had three children, one of whom died in infancy. Her husband lived for five years after their marriage. During his lifetime she wore neither sumptuous nor sordid clothing, but a Cistercian tunic under her dress, as she was devoted to the Cistercian order. She spoke but seldom, and studied to behave with such discretion and modesty in everything that she might edify everyone who knew her and incite them to live holy lives in the fear of God. She was so scrupulous in the confession of her faults that she often ascribed blame which was due to others to herself. She suffered much from the snares of the devil, from temptations of the world and the flesh, from injuries, annoyances, reproaches, contradictions, and blasphemy from both friends and servants while in the world.

On her husband's death she changed her mode of life and put away all her superfluous clothes, rings, and other ornaments. She frequently denied herself the necessities of life while pretending with a cheerful countenance to have had plenty both to eat and to drink. She

was sought again in marriage, but refused, although the Bishop of Liège tried to persuade her to consent. She was most liberal in alms-giving, and gave profusely to the poor, but she now desired to live a solitary life. First of all, however, she renounced the world, and went to serve the lepers in the leper hospital at Huy out of humility. She wished to be a leper herself so much that she ate and drank with them, and actually washed in their bath-water to inoculate herself with this terrible disease. She continued in this heroic work for eleven years.

By her prayers her father was converted and became a Cistercian monk and lived in great austerity. After his death Juetta's elder son became a Cistercian, and she decided to become a recluse in a cell which her father had had constructed in the side of the little church attached to the leper-hospital; he had intended to live there, but had become a Cistercian monk instead. Here Juetta was enclosed by the Bishop of Auræ-Vallis.

She was assailed with many temptations, and to subdue the flesh she macerated her body, she wore haircloth and an iron chain with two leaden tablets hanging round her neck like a scapular. Her food was only baked flour mixed with powdered ashes in equal proportion; she only ate three times a week, and then merely to keep herself alive. She often slept on sharp-pointed stones;¹ sometimes she allowed herself a feather pillow. In the winter she suffered from cold for she was but sparsely clothed, and she spent her days and part of the night in

¹ *Kirchen Lexikon*; *Boll.*, Jan. II.

fasts, vigils, and prayers, accompanied with tears, genuflections, strikings of the breast, and all kinds of similar exercises.

She was favoured with visions in which she saw our Lord on the Judgment Seat and His Blessed Mother sitting on His right hand. She was often rapt in contemplation of Jesus and Mary, and had visions of angels to comfort her. St. Mary Magdalene, to whom she had a great devotion, also appeared to her, and she was warned by God of the day of her death, which she foretold.

She was most humble and penitent, and fasted so rigorously that unless a prudent monk who visited her had advised and commanded her to moderate her austerities, she would have died of starvation.

Her younger son, who was leading a dissolute life, was converted by her prayers, and also like his grandfather and elder brother became a Cistercian, and died a happy death.¹

A certain religious woman named Margaret, hearing of her sanctity, joined her, and many other men and women desired to put themselves under her guidance, and through their united efforts the old buildings of the hospital were pulled down, and newer and larger built, and a large and beautiful church was erected, where three priests constantly celebrated. Two cells at the east end, outside the walls of the church, were built, one for Juetta and one for a young girl named Agnes, who was enclosed by the bishop. Another pious girl who had

¹ *Boll.*, Jan. II., pp. 145-169.

been brought up in the town was also enclosed in her own cell by the bishop.

B. Juetta died of fever on the last day of the octave of the Epiphany, to the grief of all who knew her. She made her last confession to John, abbot of the church of Floreffe, whom she had been desiring much to see, but who was absent, occupied in ecclesiastical business, but by chance, or rather by Providence, as her learned biographer says, came to Huy, and hearing of her illness went to visit her.

He ordered the partition wall of the cell in which she was lying to be broken down that he might enter, and seeing her lying in bed he paused, admiring her, for her face was serene; she had a bright colour; she was smiling and her words were playful, and she showed no sign of grave illness. She was delighted to see him, and confessed and told him her whole life. She grew worse after this, and her friends wished her to be anointed, but she told them there was no need, since she would not die till nine o'clock on the Friday following, but as they pressed it she yielded, and received Extreme Unction.

She died at the time she had foretold, saying "*In manus Tuas Domine, commendo spiritum meum,*" with a joyful face, outstretched hands, and eyes raised to Heaven. Those who were watching her were filled with Divine consolation. Her face shone brilliantly in death, and although it was a winter day and a great storm of wind, hail, snow and rain was raging, yet innumerable birds congregated round her cell and sung as if it were a summer day. She died in 1227, aged

seventy. Her life was written by Hugo, a Premonstratensian monk of Floreffe.¹

EVA (*d.* 1265).

This holy recluse played an important part in the establishment of the feast of Corpus Christi. She lived at Liège in the beginning of the thirteenth century, and, as we incidentally gather in the life of St. Juliana of Cornillon, she was rich.

St. Juliana, who was Eva's most intimate friend, was a nun in the Cistercian monastery at Corneille or Cornillon, hence her name. She entered this monastery when only five years old, and from her earliest youth was distinguished for her austerities and her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.²

Eva was always drawn to solitude, though the devil tempted her with fear and horror of it, and when she felt drawn to the anchoritic life she went to consult her friend Juliana, who encouraged her to embrace it. Before they parted, Juliana made her friend three promises, first that she would go and see her in her cell once a year, next that they would always pray for each other, and lastly that they would tell each other their most secret thoughts, which we are told was a great consolation for Eva.³

After this interview she hastened back to Liège with joy and contentment, and was enclosed in a cell built

¹ *Boll.*, Jan. II., pp. 145-189.

² *Histoire de la Fête Dieu*, by Berthelot, Liège, 1846, p. 18.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

outside the Church of St. Martin's, at Liége. The cell was completely closed up, but it had a door and two windows, one of which looked into the church. The recluse was only allowed to speak to her confessor or with his permission, and, in the presence of others, to some priest of renowned piety, and to her friend Juliana, who regarded her as her spiritual daughter.

One day St. Juliana went to see Eva, and asked her to tell her what was in her soul, but Eva, forgetting their mutual promise, hesitated. St. Juliana asked her why, and said she knew it all as well as if it were written in the palm of her hand, and to Eva's surprise she then read her thoughts.

Another time Eva was ill, and St. Juliana went to see her, but before entering her cell she went into the church to pray for her, and then told her she would soon be cured, and predicted several other things which Eva afterwards found came to pass.¹

One evening, on the eve of St. Martin's Day and dedication festival, St. Juliana went to see Eva, and on hearing that the feast was to be the next day she darted to the window of the cell which looked into the church with such impetuous zeal and emotion that unless the recluse had held her back we are told she would have fallen into the church. Then seeing a crucifix on the wall of the cell St. Juliana seized it with such grief that she fell to the earth without a sign of life. Eva picked her up and put her on her bed, and exhorted her to moderate her grief, because our Lord now suffered no

¹ *Histoire de la Fête Dieu*, p. 39.

more. When the bell rang announcing the feast had begun, St. Juliana fell into an ecstasy.

She used to beg Eva to pray for her, believing herself to be the greatest of sinners, though we are told she was innocence itself.¹ On the death of the prioress at Cornillon Juliana was elected prioress, and went to Liège to see Eva soon after, and then made her her confidante in a matter she had hitherto only communicated to the late prioress. This was that when she was only fifteen our Lord revealed to her in a vision that He desired to establish the feast of Corpus Christi; this was in 1208, but St. Juliana did not mention it to the prioress till 1230.² When she told Eva about it, the recluse asked St. Juliana to pray that she might have the same devotion to the Blessed Sacrament that she had herself, but Juliana refused to do so on account of Eva's feeble health, telling her that when she meditated on this adorable mystery she was utterly exhausted afterwards.³

The monastery at Cornillon at that time was for monks as well as nuns, the monks inhabiting one wing and the nuns the other, but the prior of the monks was a very wicked man, and incited the people of Cornillon against Juliana, and encouraged them to break into her convent and destroy everything, including the nuns' chapel. St. Juliana and some of the nuns fled to Eva; how many there were is not known, but Juliana had predicted this, and Eva had promised to receive them, and now did so and provided for them.

¹ *Histoire de la Fête Dieu.*

² *Life of St. Thomas Aquinas*, p. 126.

³ *Histoire de la Fête Dieu.*

They talked of divine things, read, and spent the greater part of the night in prayer, but as the recluse's cell was too small to accommodate them for any length of time Canon Jean de Laus offered them his house. When Juliana was restored to the office of prioress and returned to Cornillon, the canon and Eva rebuilt the chapel.

St. Juliana was driven into exile later, and died at Fosses, a town between the Sambre and Meuse, in the cell of a recluse, the sister of one of the canons of St. Martin's Collegiate Church, Liège, who was enclosed on the same day that Eva was. St. Juliana, accompanied by a friend, a nun named Ermentrude, remained three months in this cell.¹ When St. Juliana's illness ended in death in 1258 she was then sixty-eight.

At the time that St. Juliana made Eva her confidante about establishing the feast of Corpus Christi, James Pantaleone, the future Pope Urban IV., was Archbishop of Liège, and he was well acquainted with Eva. She was delighted at his elevation to the Papal throne in 1261, three years after St. Juliana's death, and on his accession she got a petition for the establishment of the feast throughout Christendom presented to him by the Bishop of Liège, through Canon Jean de Laus.²

It was not, however, a propitious moment, as there was civil war in Italy, and the Pope was in exile, but two years later St. Thomas Aquinas, when offered a bishopric for writing "*Catena Aurea*," begged his Holiness, instead

¹ *Histoire de l'Ordre de Citeaux*, Vol. VIII., p. 216.

Histoire de la Fête Dieu.

of making him a bishop, to establish this Feast. Urban consented, and ordered St. Thomas to write the office for it.¹

The Feast was celebrated for the first time on the Thursday after the octave of Pentecost, 1264, and the Pope sent a copy of his Bull commanding its institution in the whole Church the following August to Eva, with a letter to "his dear daughter in Jesus Christ, Eva, recluse of St. Martin's at Liége," telling her he had ordered the extension of the Feast to all Christendom, and enclosing a copy of the sublime Office composed by St. Thomas Aquinas. Her joy was great at her heart's desire being fulfilled, for both she and St. Juliana had been constant promoters of this Feast, and she is supposed to have died soon after she received the Pope's letter.

She was taken from her cell and buried with great pomp in the church of St. Martin's. A mausoleum to her memory on account of her sanctity was erected by the canons of St. Martin's, with a marble effigy of her in her recluse's habit and her name engraved on it.²

We are not told the date of her enclosure, but she was living in her cell in 1230, so she must at least have been a recluse for thirty-five years.

THE RECLUSE OF FOSSES (1230-1258).

We know very little of this anchoress, even her name is uncertain. We know she was a sister of one of the

¹ *Life of St. Thomas Aquinas*, p. 136.

² *Histoire de la Fête Dieu*, p. 81.

canons of St. Martin's, Liége, and in all probability her brother was the Canon Jean de Laus, the friend of Eva, the recluse of St. Martin's. She was certainly a recluse for twenty-eight years, for she was enclosed on the same day as Eva, and that was before the year 1230; and she received St. Juliana and the nun Ermensende into her cell in 1258, and nursed and tended the saint for three months, when her death took place.¹

She was enclosed at Fosses, a town situated in Namur, Belgium, between the rivers Sambre and Meuse, and is said to have been a very holy woman.

V. BERTA (1427-1514).

Venerable Berta was born in 1427, and in 1456 she entered a reclusory near the church of Maestricht, in Brabant, which was probably her birthplace. In her tomb was found a document signed and sealed in a glass box, testifying that she was a professed sister according to the rule of the anchorites, with the license and approbation of David of Burgundy, Bishop of Tongres. By this rule of the anchorites, the Bollandists say, is probably meant the rule of the Canons Regular of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine.

She lived for fifty-seven years in this cell without any fire in winter, with bare feet, wearing hair-cloth and a simple tunic both summer and winter, in perpetual abstinence not only from meat, but from milk, eggs, butter, and cheese also, and practising many other

¹ *Histoire de l'Ordre de Citeaux*, Vol. VIII., p. 216.

austerities. She died in the cell and was buried near it in her 88th year.¹

JEANNE DE CAMBRY (*d.* 1651).

The last recluse in the Netherlands was apparently Johanna or Jeanne de Cambry. She was born at Douay in 1581;² her father was the first councillor of that town. Early in life she made a vow of virginity, but always had a great repugnance to the religious life. When she was twenty-two her father desired that she should either marry a man of his choice or become a nun. She begged to be allowed three months to consider her decision. She prayed to know God's will, and found her dislike to the religious life decreased gradually, and eventually she desired to embrace it, and entered the convent of N. D. des Près of the Augustinian Order in 1604, when she received the habit.³

Here she had visions, in which she thought God revealed to her that He wished her to establish the order of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Temple, of which she drew up the constitutions. It was, however, considered that these visions proceeded from her weak state caused by her austerities, and the Pope refused to sanction the new order.⁴ It was two hundred years later when an active order of this name was founded by Ven. Marie Rivier, at Thueyts, Ardèche.

¹ *Boll.*, Jan. VII., p. 132.

² *Kirchen Lexikon*, Vol. VI., p. 640.

³ From Hélyot's *Ordres Religieux*, Vol. IV., p. 338.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

Jeanne yearned for a stricter life than the convent of N. D. des Près offered, and asked permission to leave it for another; this was granted, and she entered the Monastery de Sion, where she lived for some time, but finding her attraction for solitude growing stronger she begged the Bishop of Tournay to allow her to become a recluse, but it was four or five years before he granted her request.

He then ordered a cell to be built for her in a suburb of Lille, near the Church of St. André, and enclosed her there in 1625, when she was forty-four years of age. At the ceremony she was dressed in a habit of undyed natural wool, and was accompanied by two nuns from the Hospital of Menin. One of these carried on her arm a blue cloak, the other a black veil and a violet scapular, with a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus on it.¹ As these were the garments which she had seen in her visions were to be worn by the nuns of the order she wished to found, it would seem that the bishop did not condemn them as imaginary, for he allowed her to adopt this dress.

When the little procession reached the church of St. André they found the bishop waiting for them at the door. Jeanne threw herself at his feet, he blessed her and led her to the high altar; there he also blessed the cloak, veil, and scapular, clothed her in them, and gave her the name of Soeur Jeanne de la Presentation.² She then made before him the vow of perpetual enclosure, and he preached a sermon in her praise, and afterwards

¹ Hélyot, Vol. IV., p. 329.

² *Ibid.*

conducted her in procession to her cell, while the clergy sang "Veni sponsa Christi."

The bishop then consecrated her again to God, blessed her cell, and enclosed her in it. She followed the same rules as she had drawn up for the order of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, of which Hélyot says "she was the only nun."

She composed several books, among them these:— "La ruine de l'Amour propre," "Un Traité de la Réforme du Mariage," "Un Traité de l'excellence de la Solitude," and "Le Flambeau Mystique," all of which were published. She died in 1639 after being a recluse fourteen years. Her life has been written by her brother, a canon of the Collegiate Church of Renaise.¹

MARGARETHA.

Contemporary with Jeanne de Cambry was Margaretha, a recluse in Luxemburg. She was the daughter of Baron Wolfgang of Luschen. She was born in Stuttgart in 1592, and brought up in the Lutheran religion. One day she overheard a conversation between two Franciscans about the blessed power of the Catholic Faith, which filled her heart with such a longing after the truth that she secretly left her home for Antwerp, where she was instructed in the Faith. She then made a pilgrimage to St. Maria, Einsiedeln, where she was received into the Church. She divided her property among the poor, and became a tertiary of St. Francis, and lived in great poverty and self-denial at Luxemburg.

¹ Hélyot, Vol. IV., p. 340

After she had gone through the strictest probation, which lasted for twenty years, she was at length allowed to be enclosed in a cell at the Church of the Holy Spirit in 1623. She there lived as a recluse for twenty-eight years, and died there in 1651. Miracles were ascribed to her after her death.

PIRONA HERGODS (1472).

Pirona or Petronilla Hergods was a recluse in the cemetery of St. Nicholas, outside the walls of Mechlin. She was a Franciscan tertiary, and her life was written by her confessor, Joanne Taye, a Carmelite. She died in 1472. She is passed over with this slight mention by the Bollandists because she remains up to the present time without any veneration.¹

¹ *Boll.*, Mar. III., p. 411.

CHAPTER XV.

SPANISH ANCHORESSES.

Spanish Recluses — St. Emiliano or San Millan — St. Potamia — St. Liberata, V.M. — St. Vintila — St. Marina, V.M. — B. Oria — Constanza — Mariana — B. Maria Anna de JESUS — B. Xira and B. Maria Fernandez.

THE anchoritic life was much practised in Spain in the early ages of the Church, but abuses crept in and it became necessary to pass a canonical law that recluses must follow the regular life in some monastery first. It seems that some had become recluses through laxity rather than from the desire of a stricter life, and without any knowledge of holy exercises shut themselves up or wandered about from cell to cell, so that in 646 the Church of Spain at the Council of Toledo made a canon "De Reclusis," in which it was ruled that in future no recluses would be admitted into cells unless they had followed the regular life in some order according to its rule, and been approved by the superiors.¹

In Silos this kind of anchoritic life was practised in complete enclosure, and many souls followed it, among

¹ Florez, *España Sagrada*, Vol. XVII.

them the celebrated recluse Oria, who is thought by some writers to have been enclosed near the monastery of San Millan.

St. Emiliano, popularly called San Millan, was originally a shepherd, born in the town of Vergegio, in the diocese of Tarazono. He learnt to play the zither, and one day while he was sleeping, tradition says that Providence changed his zither into materials for study, and at the same time inspired him with a love of contemplation. Having heard of a certain hermit named Felix, he sought him, and having learnt the Faith from him he returned to Vergegio, and, to avoid intercourse with others, retired to a mountain district, where he lived for forty years. He was not allowed to enjoy the solitude he sought, for people followed him, and the Bishop of Taragona ordained him and made him parish priest of Vergegio. The austere life he led made other priests envious of him, and he was maligned by them and suspended by the bishop. He then retired to a neighbouring place, where he constructed an oratory and here passed the rest of his life to a very advanced age, and died aged 81. His oratory was a humble hut, the roof of which was covered with straw, and the cave in which he actually lived is converted into a church, and forms part of the monastery of San Millan de Suso.¹ Several recluses lived near this monastery in after years.

ST. POTAMIA.²

All we have been able to find out about this recluse is

¹ Florez, *España Sagrada*, Vol. XVII.

² *Ibid.*

that she was a disciple of San Millan, and after his death she retired to Santurde, where she finished her life. She is mentioned by Anguiana in the "Historia della Rioja."

ST. LIBERATA, V. AND M. (*d.* 139).

St. Liberata, virgin and martyr, was the daughter of Lucio Severus, ruler of Galicia and Lusitania; both her parents were idolaters. Tradition says that Lucio ordered Liberata and her sisters to be killed as infants, but the nurse saved their lives, and put them out to nurse in different families, where they were baptized and brought up in the Catholic religion. When they came to the use of reason they all consecrated themselves to God, but a persecution of the Christians broke out, and they were arrested and brought before their own father, who discovered that they were his daughters and tried to induce them to apostatise.

They refused, and ultimately all suffered martyrdom, but in the meanwhile St. Liberata, with some other Christians, retired into a desert, and here lived a most severe anchoritic life, eating only once a day, and then only taking berries and herbs and any fruit they could find in a wood near their place of retirement. She was discovered and taken prisoner by the heathen, and, after being tortured, was nailed to a cross in Lusitania about A.D. 139. Her body is venerated in the Cathedral of Sigüenza, and she is the patron saint of the whole diocese.

She was a hermitess rather than a recluse, as she was never enclosed.¹

¹ Florez, *España Sagrada*, Vol. XIV., p. 122.

ST. VINTILA (*d.* 890).¹

In the church of St. Maria de Pungin, three miles from Orense, is venerated the body of St. Vintila. She was born in Spain; her parents were of gentle birth, and brought her up in the fear of God and gave her a good education. She had good abilities, and made great progress in her studies and was also most benevolent to the poor; she grew up increasing in virtue as she became older.

The inclination to a solitary life increased with her growth, and choosing her opportunity she retired from her parents' house and entered a monastery, from which she afterwards retired to follow the anchoritic life to which God called her.

She exercised herself in fasts, vigils, and prayers, triumphing not only over her body but also over the fears with which the devil tried to turn her from her holy purpose. The fame of her sanctity increased, and many poor people came to her cell to receive her blessing. God worked many miracles by her intercession; the deaf received their hearing, the blind their sight, and others health. She persevered in the exercise of virtues and in the anchoritic life until her death on December 23rd, 890.

ST. MARINA, V. AND M.

St. Marina, or Gemma, or Margherita is a very popular saint in Spain; the diocese of Orense has no less than sixteen churches dedicated to her, besides a great many

¹ Florez, *España Sagrada*, Vol. XVII.

hermitages. She is generally believed to be a sister of St. Liberata, but Florez doubts this, and thinks she was most probably the saint mentioned in the Breviary of Compostella. Here she is said to have come from Orense, where there is a place called Antioquia, and a cave is shown here in which she is said to have been incarcerated; it is close to the church now dedicated to her, and in which her body is venerated. Florez says she most probably suffered martyrdom at Aguas Santas, in Galicia. Perhaps she ought not to be called a recluse, for it is not clear whether her imprisonment in this cave was voluntary or involuntary.

She is called Gemma because it means a jewel, or Margherita because it means a pearl, and Marina because it means the sea from which the pearl comes; so her real name is lost in obscurity. Two miracles are recorded through her intercession after her death.¹

B. ORIA (1032-1090).

One of the most celebrated of Spanish recluses was B. Oria or Aurea, who lived in the eleventh century. She was born at Villa-velayo, near Mansilla, in the province of Soria, Spain. She was of noble parentage, and from her youth condemned the luxury of her father's house, and liked to be clothed in rough, coarse clothing. She spent her time in prayer, fasting, and weeping for her sins so that it is said her eyes were like two fountains.² She gave in alms all she had to give, and practised great

¹ Florez, *España Sagrada*, Vol. XVII.

² *Boll.*, Mar. II., p. 99.

austerities, and having served her novitiate in the monastery of San Emiliano de Suso, she went to the holy abbot St. Dominic of Silos, and begged him not only to give her the black veil, but also to allow her to become a recluse because that was her desire and she believed it to be the will of God for her.

St. Dominic of Silos put all the difficulties of the life before her, but she still persisted in the wish, and he gave her the veil and enclosed her.¹ She lived an angelic life, buried in solitude with her Divine Spouse, in contemplation, peace, and joy, practising great austerities and with no other desire than to please God.

She thus persevered for some years, and was then subjected to severe temptation by the devil, who appeared to her in her cell by night and in the daytime in the form of a serpent. She prayed to be delivered from him, and sent for the holy abbot Dominic, to whom she told all her temptations. He went at once to her, and gave her Holy Communion and said Mass for her, and through her window sprinkled her and her cell with holy water. After this the vision which had so terrified her disappeared, never to return, and she persevered till death in her chosen vocation.

The fame of her sanctity spread throughout the district so that her biographer says the more strictly she enclosed herself the less could she hide her holiness; she was like a city set on a hill or a light in a dark place. She was favoured with visions, in which St. Agatha, St. Cecilia, and St. Eulalia appeared to her.

¹ Florez, *España Sagrada*.

Her death took place before 1090, some writers place the date at 1075, but her tomb and the site of her cell are uncertain. It is generally believed that she was enclosed in the monastery of St. Emiliano at La Cogolle, in the diocese of Calahorro.¹ Florez, however, thinks her cell was in the monastery of St. Sebastian, where St. Dominic of Silos was abbot.²

CONSTANZA (1218).³

Dona Constanza, a Spanish lady, lived at Silos in the thirteenth century, and there built a hospital near the monastery of St. Dominic of Silos, in which she was enclosed, having served her novitiate in some convent, for she is described on her tomb as nun and recluse. In the year 1218 she received the royal patronage of St. Fernando, then king of Spain, for her hospital.

MARIANA (1097).

Very little is known of this recluse, who appears to have been living as a recluse in 1097, when she witnessed a deed in which Fronilda, a Benedictine nun, gave to Bishop D. Garcia all her property, her houses, gardens, and pasturage as she had inherited it from her parents. This was situated in the Valley of Toranzo, and the only stipulation Fronilda made was that she should be supplied with a goat skin, a blanket, a cloak and shoes when she needed them. The deed is signed by her abbess, Juliana, two abbots, and this recluse Mariana,

¹ *Boll.*, Mar. II., p. 99.

² Florez, *España Sagrada*, Vol. XXVI., p. 233.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVII., p. 419.

who was perhaps enclosed in the same monastery to which Fronilda belonged.¹

B. MARIA ANNA DE JESUS (1565).²

B. Maria Anna de JESUS was of noble birth; her parents were good, pious, and charitable. She was born in Madrid in 1565, and lost her mother when she was eleven; her father married a second time, but her stepmother treated her cruelly. She was extraordinarily beautiful, but very retiring, and from her earliest childhood showed signs of remarkable piety.

When she was grown up her father and stepmother wanted her to marry, and, with this end in view, desired to take her into society, but she hated the world and all its pomps and vanities, and suffered much because her father desired her to make what he considered a suitable marriage. With the consent of her confessor she made a vow of perpetual virginity in the church of St. Michael's, Madrid. When her parents discovered this, they treated her most severely, they even beat her and shut her up in a dark attic and gave her bread and water to eat and drink. Then as this failed to induce her to break her vow they sent her to serve in the kitchen; this she did with joy, but her stepmother ill-treated her, and she had to endure affronts and even blows from her. She suffered all this for some years, until at length her parents consented to her giving herself to God. She now sought to enter a convent, but none of those in the neighbour-

¹ Florez, *España Sagrada*, Vol. XXVI., p. 233.

² *Glorias de la Iglesia Española*, by Garcia San Juan, Vol. II., p. 283.

hood would take her, and her confessor thought she must be under a delusion, which caused her great mental suffering. She had a vision about this time in which our Lady appeared to her and told her if she wished to please her she would become a discalced nun, and soon after God gave her another director, a holy priest, the founder of the order of Discalced Sisters of Mercy.

For six years she suffered from severe and painful illness, which she bore most patiently. She was about forty when her parents died, and the following year, 1606, she went to live with Catalina de Cristo, near St. Catalina de los Donados. Her great desire, however, was to be near the convent of St. Barbara, and with Catalina and a servant she moved to a house opposite this church. Here she lived for some months in a little room of bare bricks, but the house passing to a certain lady who turned her into the street and loaded her with affronts, the religious took her into a verandah which had a door into the street. In this verandah, where at least she had a roof over her head, she made a poor little cell and joined an oratory to it; on the other side of her cell she made a humble room for her companion Sister Catalina, and had a window in this to communicate with the convent and receive the Sacraments through it.

Although not enclosed strictly like a recluse, still in this cell she led the life of one. When the bell rang for matins in the convent she rose, and while the nuns said matins she passed the time in contemplation, after which she slept a short time till three o'clock, and then she rose, kissed the floor, said some prayers, and went into

the church, where she remained till noon. She returned to the church for vespers and compline, and then retired into her cell and continued her exercises till eleven at night.

She led this life till 1613, when she received the habit of the Sisters of Mercy in the church of St. Barbara, and the following year made her profession. She read Latin and understood scholastic theology, and wrote many books which received the approbation of the Holy See. Her humility was so great that she considered herself the vilest of creatures, and wept for her sins and for the sins of others as though she had been an accomplice in them. She practised the most rigorous penances and mortifications, wearing on her head a crown of thorns and another on her breast, haircloth and pointed chains (*catanellas*) on her arms, and a thick cord round her neck. She slept on the ground or on bare boards, with a stone for her pillow, and at certain times of the year on bundles of thorns and briars. She rarely took more than four hours' sleep, often only two. She never ate more than six ounces of food, and her fasts were very frequent. On Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays she fasted on bread and water, and during Advent and Lent and vigils also on bread and water, and frequently passed the whole night in prayer.

She often had raptures and ecstasies, visions and other celestial favours. In 1624 she had a severe illness, and died on April 17th at the age of 59. When it was known that she was in danger, princes, grandees, and other dignitaries went to her cell to receive her last

blessing. She appeared to many people after her death, and many cures were worked by her intercession.

Pius VI. beatified her in 1783.¹

B. CONSTANCIA XIRA AND B. MARIA FERNANDEZ
(15th Century).²

These holy women were not, strictly speaking, recluses, but the foundresses of the convent of St. Monica of the Order of the Augustinian Friars Hermits. They were both born at Evora, in Portugal, and are known in Portugal as the Poor Sisters, though they were sisters only in spirit, not in the flesh.

They were women so given to charitable works that they chose for love of God to live by the work of their hands or on the alms of the faithful, subjecting themselves at first to no religious rule, but content to live under the direction of their confessor.

They founded a sort of community or company of recluses, who lived in houses built for that purpose; they afterwards followed the rule of St. Augustine, and a form of monastic life was introduced under the Rule of the Friars Hermits and the title of St. Monica, but only Constancia Xira was professed under this rule. She died first, on March 23rd. She was the elder and the first prioress; at the time of her death the Poor Sisters, as the community was called, had no church of their own in which to be buried.³

¹ *Glorias de la Iglesia Española*, by Garcia San Juan, Vol. II., pp. 283-287.

² *Santoral Español*, 1880, Madrid.

³ *Boll.*, Maij VII., p. 408.

CHAPTER XVI.

RECLUSES' CELLS IN ENGLAND.

THE few cells mentioned in this chapter are acknowledged by archæologists to have been recluses' cells ; many more may exist in England which have not yet been investigated, and there may be others of which the writer has failed to obtain any information.

Some archæologists consider that one of the many disputed uses of low-side windows may have been for recluses to communicate with the outside world if enclosed inside the church, or to see into the church if the cell was exterior to it. If this be so, as low-side windows are far more common than anchorites' squints, recluses were probably far more numerous than is commonly supposed, though the Rev. Edward Turner, M.A., in an article on the anchorite's cell at Aldrington, says " that from the end of the twelfth to the beginning of the sixteenth century not only had most of the ancient towns in the kingdom anchorages attached to their churches, but Norwich, Coventry, Northampton, and other large places too numerous to mention were remarkable for the number of their anchorages. Most of them were a part of the fabric of the church, but a few stood in the churchyard, in which cases the rule was that the anchor-

age, if the recluse was not walled in, should be in such a position as to admit of free communication with the church.”¹

In olden times some one usually slept in every church as a guardian of the Blessed Sacrament and of the treasures and offerings of shrines; very often these guardians may have been recluses, but sometimes they certainly were not anchorites or anchoresses, and it is uncertain whether the rooms over vestries and in old towers were inhabited by these guardians or by priests, sometimes the rector of the parish, or a chauntry priest, or by recluses.

The writer quoted above says some anchorites chose lofts in steeple-towers for their cells, as being high up above the world, and he mentions the Venerable Peter, Abbot of Cluny, as one who selected a steeple-loft for his abode.

The uncertainty of the use of these rooms over church porches and vestries and in church towers and of low-side windows makes it extremely difficult to obtain even an approximate list of cells of which remains still exist in this country. Moreover, as the cells were often only of wood and thatch, all trace of them in many cases is obliterated, and in most instances the squint is all that remains as a memorial of the soul whose loving eyes, dead to all earthly pleasures and sights, strained every nerve to catch a glimpse of the altar or perhaps of the ambry in which the Blessed Spouse of these “prisoners of Christ” was also enclosed.

¹ *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. XII., pp. 125-6.

Although recluses' cells are usually found against the chancel-wall, there was no rule about their position; all that was essential was that they should command a view of the altar.

They were, however, bound to be near a monastery or a city, to ensure the recluse obtaining food and not being left to die of starvation, as might have happened in a remote country village. Indeed, unless the bishop was quite satisfied that sufficient means of living was possessed by the recluse, and that food and necessities would certainly be provided, he would not grant a license for his or her enclosure.

In the ninth century the rules for anchorites were relaxed, and they were allowed if they desired it to have their cells in the churchyard, and to have a small piece of garden in which they could work attached to them. This appears to have been permitted only to anchorites; anchoresses seem to have been always strictly enclosed, though they sometimes, as we have said before, lived in houses, but enclosed in one room communicating with a church or oratory, and their two maids living in the house.

The following accounts of cells of which traces exist are abridged from the archæological publications of various counties.

Cornwall.

MICHAELSTOWE.

There was evidently an anchorite or anchoress once living in this little village church, as the anchorite's squint in the chancel proves. It is a quatre-foil opening

at the north-west corner of the chancel, 4 feet 8 inches from the floor, and commanding a view of the altar.

In the exterior north wall of the chancel is a small arched window, which was probably the anchorite's window.

Durham.¹

In Durham Cathedral there used to be a porch called an anchorage at the east end of the north alley of the choir between two pillars. In it was a rood with some most beautiful pictures of Our Blessed Lady and St. John, and also an altar. This cell was inhabited by an anchorite at whose Mass the priors of Durham frequently assisted. It was near the shrine of St. Cuthbert, and the entrance to it was up some stairs.

CHESTER-LE-STREET.²

There was a celebrated anchorage at the west end of the church here, consisting of two rooms, one over the other, made by walling off the western bay of the north aisle. Besides these rooms two others were built north of the former, and outside the wall of the aisle; they communicated with each other. In the upper room a squint enabled the recluse to see the altar in the south aisle; there is also a peculiar window in the west wall of the same room.

After the Protestant Reformation this anchorage was used as an alms-house.

¹ Boyle's *Guide to Durham*, p. 231.

² *Ibid.*, p. 420.

Essex.**RETTENDEN.**

There was a recluse's house adjoining the north side of the church of Rettenden, consisting of two storeys. The lower room, now a vestry, was originally dark, with no trace of a window; from this room is a stone winding-staircase up to the upper room, which was evidently a recluse's cell. There were two arched niches on the south, with stone benches, and in the eastern niche is a small window which is now blocked, but formerly commanded a view of the altar. This cell contained a fireplace originally as there was a chimney in the north wall of it, and on the west of the chimney evidently the window by which the recluse communicated with the outer world; it is a small square opening, and a hook on which the shutter used to hang still remains. This window is ten feet above the ground on the exterior side.¹

LAINDON.

There is also a recluse's house at Laindon, but it has been modernised.

CHIPPING ONGAR.

The church of St. Martin, Chipping Ongar, is a small one of early Norman date, consisting originally of only chancel and nave. "On the north side of the chancel-wall is a lancet-shaped recess, 14 inches in height and 6

¹ See *Art Journal* on "Essex Hermits," by the Rev. Ed. Cutts, M.A., 1861, p. 225, etc.

in breadth on the inner north wall of the chancel.”¹ In the course of the restoration of this church another “arched recess was found constructed in the thickness of the Norman walls about five feet in height and four in breadth.”² In the centre of this recess was a window about three feet from the ground, which had been originally closed by a shutter on the outside. From this and other marks Mr. Dewick concludes it is almost certain there was once a cell rudely constructed against the north wall of the chancel, with a window looking into the church which could be closed with a shutter.

This cell was placed on the north side of the church perhaps because the greater part of the village lay on the north, therefore it was the more frequented road, and there was less danger of food for the recluse being forgotten.³

The sex, name, or state of the Chipping Ongar recluse is unknown, but the remains of the cell have happily been left untouched by the restorer. “O si sic omnes!”

Herts.

BENGEO.

This interesting little Norman church of the twelfth century has the round east end which is not now often met with; it contains nave and chancel only. “In the north side of the chancel wall is a hole four feet high and twenty inches wide, which was broken through the flint wall, but contains no marks of a door. It seems

¹ *Archæological Journal*, Vol. XLV., pp. 284-287, by the Rev. E. S. Dewick, M.A.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

that a little wooden hut was formerly built outside this hole against the wall of the church, as the marks of the beams still remain.”¹

This cell must have been a very small one; “it was probably only eight feet from east to west, and the greatest height six feet; the walls were probably of mud and clay daubing and the roof thatch.”² Mr. Mickelthwaite thinks “the entrance to the cell may have been blocked, and a squint towards the altar formed in the blocking.”³ If the cell was inhabited by a recluse it certainly was blocked up in some way; it could not have been open to the church.

“There is also a recess in the church wall west of the doorway, which was the recluse’s seat and perhaps his sleeping place. The rudeness of the work points to an early date, probably the twelfth century.”⁴ Nothing is known of the Bengeo recluse.

Rent.

FAVERSHAM.

In 1464 there was an anchoress living in a little chapel in the north-east corner of the churchyard of the church at Faversham. In that year she received a small legacy under the will of R. Wynston, of Faversham. She had a servant, and in 1480 the vicar of the place left her 4d. and the servant 2d. as a perpetual annuity to the cell, which was the recognised abode of an anchoress.

In the thirteenth or fourteenth century Celestria, a

¹ *Archæological Journal*, Vol. XIV., p. 26, by J. T. Mickelthwaite, F.S.A.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

nun, was enclosed here, and in the same register Adilda, another nun, is mentioned as a recluse here. There are two cruciform loopholes in the west wall of the transept of the church which it is believed were used as squints. They were closed outside with a wooden shutter.

In 1476 William Thornbury, vicar of the parish, resigned his living, and lived for eight years as an anchorite in a little chapel in the churchyard here, which he probably built for himself as he was a man of means.

It is considered by the writer from whom the above account is taken that most anchorites were priests and dwelt within the church.¹

Leicester.

In 1392 an anchoress named Matilda, living in a cell attached to St. Peter's Church, was cited to appear before Courtenay, Archbishop of Canterbury, at evensong, on All Souls' Day, when he went to her cell and argued with her on some Lollard opinions which she held. He then ordered her to appear before him at St. James' Abbey, Northampton, where she confessed her errors, performed the penance he set her, and returned to her cell.

At St. Mary's, Leicester, near the Castle, there was a cell at the west end of the north aisle with a window at the east end looking up the aisle.

Surrey.

SHERE.

There was a recluse's cell attached to this church, for

¹ From *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. VII., p. 24.

the marks of the pent roof which covered it still remain, and in the north wall of the chancel is a small window or squint pierced obliquely and looking towards the altar, and also a quatre-foil opening, through which it is conjectured the recluse received the Blessed Sacrament passed to him or her in a spoon with a long handle used for that purpose.

No evidence exists as to who inhabited this cell, but the quatre-foil and the small window point to its having been a recluse, for it must be remembered that similar cells were sometimes occupied by the priest or by itinerant clergy, monks or friars; but a very large proportion were anchorites' or anchoresses' cells.¹

COMPTON.

In the interesting old church of St. Nicholas, Compton, which possesses an upper and a lower chancel, there is "against the south wall of the chancel a kind of pent-house only a few feet square, which contains the staircase to the upper chancel and in its lower stage a cell with a quatre-foil opening into the lower chancel, through which the inmate of the cell received Holy Communion and assisted at Mass."² As archæologists are not agreed as to this being a genuine recluse's cell, it is as well to add that the writer of the article from which we are quoting says "the Compton pent-house was in reality an anchor-hold, as such places were termed."

¹ See *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. XIII., "Low Side Windows of Surrey Churches," by Philip Mainwaring Johnston.

² See "Three Surrey Churches," a review in *The Athenæum*, Oct. 13th, 1900, p. 485.

The squint is at present blocked; the date is apparently thirteenth century.

Sussex.

ALDRINGTON.

The parish and living of Aldrington still exist, but there is neither church nor village remaining of what in the fifteenth century was a large village, while Brighton was then only a "poor fishing village," and Aldrington was a seaport of some note. The encroachments of the sea have, however, in the course of the ages demolished the houses, and only a few ruins remain of the church, to which in the days of Aldrington's prosperity an anchorite's house or cell was attached.

In the year 1402 William Bolle, then rector of the parish, applied for the bishop's license to live as an anchorite in his church, as we gather from the Chichester Episcopal Registers. It is supposed that he was formerly a canon of the Premonstratensian monastery of St. Radigund, because he is called "chaplain" in the register. His cell was erected against the chancel wall to enable him to have a view of the altar through his window. He resigned his living before he applied for permission to be an anchorite, but as no provision was made for his maintenance, it is supposed that he had sufficient means of his own to satisfy the Bishop.

The cell was to be built in the churchyard, on the north side of the church, with an entrance and exit to and from the chapel of Our Lady close by the corner in which the cell was to be constructed. It was to be twenty-nine

feet long and twenty-four feet wide, and here the said William Bolle was to live till the end of his life.¹

LEWES (ST. JOHN'S).

In the year 1587, when some alterations were made in this church, an inscription was discovered on the arch of a Norman doorway leading into the chapel, which revealed that a certain anchorite named Mangnus had formerly lived as an anchorite in this church. From the lines, which are four Latin hexameters, we gather that this recluse was a Danish knight of royal blood who, being great (*magnus*) in name and great in fame, put off his greatness and became small and an anchorite, being disgusted with the vanity of the world.

No traces remain of the cell, nor up to the present has the cell at St. Anne's, formerly St. Mary-in-Westoute, Lewes, been discovered, though it is known that an anchoress lived there in 1242, when St. Richard of Chichester mentioned her in his will.²

The inscription runs as follows in the original:—

“Clauditur hic miles, Danorum regia proles.
Mangnus nomen ei, Mangne nota progeniei.
Deponens Mangnum, se moribus induit agnum.
Prepete pro vitâ, fit parvulus Anachorita.”

HARDHAM.

This little village church, built in the eleventh century, is covered with a series of paintings, which are some of the oldest remaining in England. It also contains an

¹ From *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. XII., pp. 117-127.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XII., p. 133.

anchorite's window or Sacrament squint, which was partially destroyed in 1330, when a large window was added to the church close to it. The recluses who inhabited the cell must then have lived before that date.

We learn from the will of the great Sussex saint, Richard de la Wych, a Dominican friar afterwards Bishop of Chichester, that it was inhabited then by an anchorite, for he bequeathed him half a mark (6s. 8d.), and he leaves the same sum to the anchoress at Hoghton and to the anchoress at Stopham, and five shillings to the anchoress of Blessed Mary of Westoute, now St. Anne's, Lewes, and forty shillings to Friar Humphrey, recluse at Pageham, all in the county of Sussex.

It is considered probable that this cell was built between 1245, when St. Richard became Bishop of Chichester, and 1253, the date of his death, and that he enclosed the recluse at Hardham between these two dates. This cell was about eight feet square, probably built of wattle-and-daub, and roofed with thatch or reeds from the river which runs close by, for had it been built of more lasting material some traces would have remained of the roof and walls. Besides the window into the church it must have had a second window, grated and with a shutter, through which food was passed to the recluse, and at which he received visitors, and, if he was a priest, heard confessions; and, higher up, glazed with horn, was a third window, probably to admit light.¹

¹ See "Hardham Church," by Philip Mainwaring Johnston in *Archæological Journal*, Vol. LVIII., No. 229, pp. 62-92, from which this account is taken.

KINGSTON-BY-SEA.¹

There is every reason to believe there was once an anchor-hold here. There are marks of a pent-roof and of a small lean-to building adjoining the north wall of the chancel; also a small window and a narrow doorway, both now blocked up, remain in the north wall of the chancel. The date is thirteenth century.

RUSTINGTON.²

A recluse's cell in all probability once existed in the church at Rustington, a village on the coast, a few miles from Kingston-on-Sea. Foundations of the cell exist still in the churchyard on the north side of the chancel, and there is a square opening or squint in the wall near the east end of the chancel.

Staffordshire.

NORTH CAMPVILLE.³

There is an anchorite's cell attached to this church, the date of which is fourteenth century. It is vaulted and groined with stone; the length from north to south is 17 feet, the breadth from east to west 12 feet. Apparently this cell was reached by a "newell" staircase in the south-east angle from the doorway in the north-east angle of the chancel. On the south side there is a small window, now blocked, which formerly looked into the church.

¹ See "Low Side Windows of Sussex Churches," by Philip Mainwaring Johnston, in *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. XIII.

² *Ibid.*

³ See *Art Journal* for 1861, p. 180.

Oxfordshire.**CHIPPING-NORTON.**

Over the vestry in this church is a recluse's cell to which access is gained by a staircase in the north-west angle. Probably the recluse was a priest, as in the lower room there is an ancient stone altar with a piscina and niche for a statue. In the cell itself there are apertures in the wall to enable the recluse to look into the chancel and the north aisle of the church.

Warwickshire.**WARMINGTON.**

The vestry in this church was formerly a recluse's cell. It is entered by a descent of three steps from the north side of the chancel; it contained an ancient stone altar with a square-headed window in the east wall over it, and a piscina, which suggests that the recluse was a priest.

A flight of stone steps in the south-west leads to a loft wherein is a fireplace. In the south-west corner is a small pointed window commanding a view of the high altar in the chancel of the church. There was also a window in the north wall.

S. Wales.**CRICKHOWEL.¹**

At the church of St. Petricio, five miles from Crickhowel, is a recluse's cell in which was formerly a stone

¹ See *Art Journal* for 1861, p. 189.

altar on the east side, so probably the recluse here was a priest. Above the altar was a window commanding a view of the altar in the church; this is the only communication the cell had with the church. It was situated at the west end of the church, an unusual position.

Westminster.¹

On the south side of the Infirmary cloister in Westminster Abbey is an anchorite's cell. It is built of stone, and is 12 feet long and 8 feet broad, with an arched roof 10 feet high. There is a narrow opening on the side of the church into the chapel of St. Catherine, through which the recluse heard Mass and received the Sacraments. On the opposite side was a grating, too high for the anchorite to see out of it, through which his food was passed, and there was a stone bench for his seat; the cell also contained a crucifix. The anchorite used his frock for his blanket, and had no furniture.

The unpublished chronicle of a nameless and not saintly monk quoted by Sir Walter Besant in his book on Westminster says that in the beginning of the reign of Henry IV. there was living immured in this cell an old anchorite, a very saintly man, with white hair and a long beard reaching to his waist; his figure was tall and bent, his face thin and corpse-like; he thus lived in this narrow cell for sixty years, and died at the age of 100.

He was succeeded by the sub-prior of Westminster, Humphrey of Lambhythe, said to have surpassed his predecessor in holiness. He was a very austere man,

¹ From *Westminster*, by Sir Walter Besant, pp. 108-110.

severe to others as well as to himself. In the description which follows of his enclosure there is no mention of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction being administered, so it probably was not in use in the diocese of Westminster. A large motley crowd assembled to witness the enclosure; dust was sprinkled on the recluse's head and he was walled up. Henry V., on the death of his father, went to confession to this holy man.

**TABLE OF
ENGLISH RECLUSES.**

TABLE OF ENGLISH RECLUSES.

County Bucks.

PLACE.	RECLUSE.	NAME.	STATE OF LIFE.	DATE.	REMARKS.
High Wycombe	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	Uncertain	Cell.

County Cambridge.

Cambridge	Anchoress	Alice Graunsetter	Carmelite nun	—	—
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County Cornwall.

Michaelstowe	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Window in exterior, squint in interior wall of chancel
Kneighton Kiene, St. Sectarior's	Anchoress	Sisters (two)	—	—	Robert Hawker wrote poem about them
St. Burian's	Anchoress	St. Burian	Irish birth	630	Canonised
St. Guerin's, now Neot-Stoke	Anchorite	St. Neot	Related to King Alfred	877	Remains moved to St. Neot's, Hunts

County Devon.

Exeter, St. Leonard's	Anchoress	Alice	Unknown	1397	Cell in the Churchyard
Exeter, St. Leonard's	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1408	—
Exeter, St. Leonard's	Anchoress	Christina Holby	Augustinian nun, Canoness	1458	Several Anchoresses in succession lived in this cell.
Colyford	Anchoress	Beatrice de Colyford	Widow	1332	—
Pilton	Anchoress	Alicia	Unknown	1332	—

County Durham.

Durham Cathedral	Anchorite	Unknown	Probably a priest	—	Cell, with altar at east end of north alley of choir
Staendrop	Anchorite	Brother John de Camera	Probably a monk	1336	Cell over ancient vestry, with window com- manding view of altar
Chester-le-Street	Anchorite	John de Wessington	—	1383-4	Two rooms, one over the other, at west end of church
Chester-le-Street	Anchorite	John Blenkinsop	—	1400	Squint in upper room, with view of altar
Finchale	Anchorite	Goderick	—	—	Lived here for fifty years

County Berbp.

PLACE.	RECLUSE.	NAME.	STATE OF LIFE.	DATE.	REMARKS.
Melbourne	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Cell

County Dorset.

Hazelborough	Anchorage	St. Ulrich	Born near Bristol	d. 1154	—
Tarente Keystone	Anchoresses	Three sisters of gentle birth	Unmarried	1284-1315	Ancren Rible was written for them

County Essex.

Chipping Ongar	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Cell on north side of chancel, with window looking into church
Rettenden	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Recluse's house here on north side of church
Colchester, Holy Trinity	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	This recluse is mentioned by Morant

County Gloucester.

Gloucester	Anchorage	Unknown	Priest	1502	St. Nicholas' Church, mentioned in Lord Scrope's will
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Tewkesbury	Anchore	Theocus	Lived on site of Abbey	—	Tewkesbury named after him
Avening	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Uncertain	Cell inside church, with squint towards altar
Quinton	Anchoress	Dame Jean Clopton	Widow of Knight	1419-1430	Brass with effigy and inscription still exists
Daglingworth	Anchore	Unknown	Probably priest	12th cent.	Cell over nave, with stone altar
Cromhall on Anchorite Hill	Anchore	Unknown	A very holy man, probably a priest	5th cent.	Bangor monks used to consult him

County Berks.

Bengeo	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	13th cent. probably	Very small cell built against wall of church
St. Alban's in St. Alban's Church	Anchoress	Lady Alicia	Unknown	1426	—
St. Alban's in St. Peter's Church	Anchoress	Unknown	Unknown	1480	—
St. Alban's in St. Michael's Church	Anchoress	Lady Margaret Smythe	Unknown	1483	—
St. Alban's in St. Michael's Church	Anchore	Symon Appulby	—	1483-1503	Authorised to have the cell vacated by Lady Margaret Smythe

County Kent.

PLACE.	REGUL.	NAME.	STATE OF LIFE.	DATE.	REMARKS.
Polton, near Dover	Anchoresses	In St. Radigonde's Abbey and near it	Unknown	589	Many mentioned by Mabillon
Hardlip	Anchorite	Robert	—	—	—
Faversham	Anchoresses	Celestria	Nun	13th or 14th cent.	Recognised cell for anchoresses
		Adilda	Nun	13th or 14th cent.	
		Anchoress, with servant	Unknown	1464	
Erith	Anchorite	William Thornbury	Priest and Vicar	1472-1480	Cell in the churchyard, probably built by recluse
Sandwich, St. Mary's	Anchoress	Sungiva	Vowess	—	Gave her veil to the Priory of Roffense
Dartford	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him 13/4

County Lancashire.

Whalley	Anchoresses (two)	Unknown	Unknown: two servants lived with them	1349	Henry of Lancaster left endowments in trust to Abbot of Whalley for them
Whalley	Anchoress	Isolde de Heton	Broke loose	—	Henry VI. who nominated her, dissolved the hermitage

County Leicester.

Leicester at St. Peter's	Anchoress	Matilda	—	1388-1392	Cited to appear before bishop for holding Lollard principles, censured, and sent back there
Leicester at St. Mary's	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Cell in west end of north aisle window at east looking up aisle
Leicester	Anchorite	William of Swyn-derby	Priest	—	Called William the Hermit; he lived in a chamber in the church

County Lincoln.

Lincoln at St. Mary's of Broughton	Anchorite	Brother John Kyn-geston	A Chertsey monk	1409	—
Gainsborough	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him 13/4 in his will
Stamford	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him 13/4 in his will

County Middlesex.

Westminster Abbey	Anchorite	Unknown	Priest: a most saintly man, a centenarian, enclosed for 60 years	1350-1410	Richard II. confessed to him before going to meet Wat Tyler in 1381
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County *Siddelex*—continued.

PLACE.	RECLUSE.	NAME.	STATE OF LIFE.	DATE.	REMARKS.
Westminster Abbey	Anchorite	Humphrey of Lambhythe	Monk, Priest and Superior of Westminster Abbey	1410-1414	Henry V. confessed to him on his father's death in 1413
Westminster Abbey	Anchoress	Unknown	—	1483	Richard III. gave her an annuity of 6 marks
Blackfriars	Anchoress	Katharine Foster	Vowess	1471-1479	—
Blackfriars	Anchoress	Katharine Man	Vowess	1548	—
St. Peter's, Cornhill	Anchoress	—	—	—	—
Bishopsgate	Anchoress	—	—	1426	—
St. Clement's, Temple Bar	Anchoress	Lady Joan	—	1426	—
St. Laurence's, Jewry	Anchorite	Richard de Swepe-stone	Priest	1367	—
St. Laurence's, Jewry	Anchorite	Geoffrey Richards	Priest	1367	—

County *Northampton*.

Croyland	Anchoress	St. Etheldritha	—	d. 834	Canonised
Courtenhall	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Cell, low side window and squint
Fawsley	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Cell, low side window and squint

Catesby Priory	Anchoress	Alice, sister of St. Edmund, Abp.	Benedictine Prioress	d. 1270	Within precincts of Monastery
Northampton	Anchoress	Alice Wakelyn	Of gentle birth	d. 1428	—
Northampton	Anchoress	Margaret Hawton	—	1426	—
Peaskirk, near Croyland	Anchoress	St. Pega	—	d. 719	Canonised

County Northumberland.

Farne Islands	Anchorite	St. Cuthbert	Bishop and Priest	676	—
Farne Islands	Anchorite	Ethelwald	Monk of Ripon	681-699	—
Farne Islands	Anchorite	Felgeld	Unknown	699	—
Farne Islands	Anchorite	Elwin	Unknown	—	—
Farne Islands	Anchorite	Bartholomew	Prior of Durham	1163-1193	—
Farne Islands	Anchorite	Thomas	Monk of Durham	1163	Joined Bartholomew
Farne Islands	Anchorite	Thomas of Melsonby	Prior of Durham	1244-1246	—
Warkworth Hermitage	Hermit	Sir Bertram of Bortral	Knight	—	—
Ovingham	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Cell
Amble	—	—	—	—	Cell

County Northumberland—continued.

PLACE.	RECLUSE.	NAME.	STATE OF LIFE.	DATE.	REMARKS.
Hexham, Erneshow	Anchorite	St. John of Beverley	Priest and Bishop	650-721	Resigned bishopric, and lived 4 years in cell afterwards
Ford Abbey	Anchorite	John Cherde	Monk	1402	—
Newcastle, in Dominican Priory	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him 13/4

County Oxon.

Chipping Norton	—	—	—	—	—
Thornbury	Anchoress	St. Frideswitha	Abbess	8th cent.	In an oratory built for her

County Rutland.

Rhial on the West	Anchoress	Tibba	Royal birth	Saxon times	—
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County Norfolk.

Norwich, All Saints	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	—	—
Norwich, Southgate, St. John the Evangelist	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1300	Had part of churchyard for garden

Norwich, Conesford Street, St. John the Evangelist	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Had part of churchyard for garden
Norwich, St. John the Baptist	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Henry III.	In churchyard
Norwich, St. Edward's	Anchoresses	Lady Joan Dame Anneys Kyte	Lived here with two maids	1428 1458	Cell on north side of church in churchyard	
Norwich, St. Etheldred's, in Church-yard	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	Till 15th cent.	Anchorites dwell here till Reformation when cell was pulled down	
Norwich, St. Saviour's	Anchoress	—	—	—	—	
Norwich, St. Mary Le Brent	Anchoress	—	—	—	—	
Norwich, St. Mary in Costamoy	Anchoress	—	—	—	Called St. Anne's anchoress; cell in churchyard	
Norwich, Chapel in Fields	Anchorite	Sir Thomas	—	1410	—	
Norwich	Anchoress	Lady Emma Stapelton	Carmelite nun	1421-1422	—	
Norwich, Bargate, St. James'	Anchoress	Unknown	Carmelite nun	1442	—	
Norwich, St. James'	Anchorite	Unknown	Carmelite friar	1443	Near north-east end of St. Martin's bridge	
Norwich, Carmelite Monastery	Anchorite	Friar Thomas	Carmelite friar	1443-1510	—	

County Norfolk—continued.

PLACE.	REQUIRE.	NAME.	STATE OF LIFE.	DATE.	REMARKS.
Norwich, St. Julian's	Anchoress	Mother Juliana Lampit	Vowess	1343-1443	Perhaps a Benedictine nun
Norwich, Bear St., Holy Sepulchre	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	13th cent.	—
St. Julian's, Norwich	Anchoress	Dame Agnes	Vowess	1472	—
<i>Ibid.</i>	Anchoress	Dame Eliz. Scott	Vowess	1481	—
<i>Ibid.</i>	Anchoress	Lady Elizabeth	Vowess	1510	—
<i>Ibid.</i>	Anchoress	Dame Agnes Edrygge	Vowess	1524	—
Norwich, Carmelite Monastery	Anchorite	Thomas Scroope	Monk, afterwards bishop	1443	First Benedictine, then Carmelite monk
<i>Ibid.</i>	Anchorite	Brother John Castleacre	Priest	1465	—
<i>Ibid.</i>	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1494	Legacy left to him in 1494
Holkham	Anchoress	St. Withburga	—	743	Canonised
Walsingham	Anchoress	Unknown	Vowess	1526	—
Massingham	Anchoress	Lady Ela and Companion	Vowesses	1256	Lady Ela was niece of Bishop Suffield
Marham	Anchorite	Unknown	—	Before 1396	Anchor-hold and chapel of St. Guthlac

Hitcham	Anchorite	Unknown	—	Unknown	Cell belonged to Priory of Lewes, Sussex
Coxford Priory	Anchoress	Unknown	Vowess	Unknown	Hermitage and cell; cottage called Anchoress Cottage to this day
Brandliston	Anchoress	Unknown	Vowess	1526	—
Thompson College, near Watton	Anchoress	Dame Joan Sharde-low	Widow	1369	—
Thetford, at St. Cuthbert's	Anchorite	Unknown	Priest	—	He performed Divine service in church

County Nottingham.

Southwell Minster, in Holme Chapel	Anchoress	Nan Scott	Unknown	12th cent.	Loft with fire-place, called still Nan Scott's chamber
Upton	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	12th cent.	Loft with fire-place
Knerall	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	1415	Henry, third Lord Scrope, left 6/4 to recluse here
Nottingham	Anchoress	Unknown	Unknown	1463	—
Knesall, near Southwell	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope of Peasham left him 13/4

County Salop.

PLACE.	REGULAS.	NAME.	STATE OF LIFE.	DATE.	REMARKS.
Acton Burnell	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Cell
Much Wenloch	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Cell
Shrewsbury, St. Romuald's	Anchoress	Isolda de Hungerford	Several anchoresses lived here	1310	In churchyard; Bishop of Lichfield directed Walter of Langton to enclose her
Shrewsbury, St. George's Chapel	Anchoress	Emma Sprenghouse	—	1310	In the churchyard; mentioned in Bishop of Lichfield's Register
Prior's Lee, near Shifnal	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him 13/4
Prior's Lee, near Shifnal	Anchorite	Richard Goldestone	Formerly Canon of Wombbridge	1409	Licensed to hear confessions by Bishop of Lichfield in 1409

County Stafford.

Stafford	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him 13/4
Leek	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him 13/4
N. Camperville	Unknown	—	—	14th cent.	Vaulted cell reached by "newell" staircase

County Somerset.

Haselbury	Anchorite	St. Wulfic	Priest	12th cent.	—
Brandon, near Bristol	Anchoress	Lucy de Newchirche	Vowess	1251	Enclosed by Archdeacon, commissioned by Bishop of Worcester
Skapwith, near Glastonbury	Anchoress	St. Dominica	—	8th cent.	Sometimes called St. Drusa
Keynsham	Anchoress	St. Keyna	—	6th cent.	In a wood

County Suffolk.

Ipswich	Anchoress	Agnes	Matron of noble birth	—	—
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County Sussex.

Chichester, the Cathedral	Anchorite	William Bolle	Priest	1400	Probably William Bolle was a recluse here at one time
Aldrington	Anchorite	William Bolle	Priest and rector and canon of Radigund	1402	No church at Aldrington now
Hardham	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1253	—
Hoghton	Anchoress	Unknown	Unknown	1253	—

County Sussex—continued.

PLACE.	RECLUSE.	NAME.	STATE OF LIFE.	DATE.	REMARKS.
Kingston-by-Sea	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	13th cent.	Marks of cell remain
Lewes, St. Anne's	Anchoress	Unknown	Unknown	1253	—
Lewes, St. John's	Anchorite	Magnus	A Danish knight of royal blood	—	Inscription describing this recluse discovered on chancel archway in 1587
Pareham	Anchorite	Friar Humphrey	Religious, probably a Dominican	1253	—
Rustington	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Uncertain	Traces still remain of cell
Stopeham	Anchoress	Unknown	Unknown	1253	—

County Surrey.

Compton	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	13th cent.	Squint remains
Shere	Anchoress	Unknown	Carthusian nun probably	—	Remains of cell still exist

County Worcester.

Worcester, Benedictine Priory	Anchoresses (two)	Unknown	Probably nuns	1240	Mentioned in Worcester Priory Register as receiving beer and bread
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Drakelow	Anchorite	Holy Austin	—	—	None
Evesham	Anchorite	Wulfsey	—	1043	None
Wyre	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	—	Cell
Hartlebury	Unknown	Unknown	—	—	Cell
Malvern, in oratory	Hermit	Werstan	—	Saxon times	Oratory on western slope of hill

County Warwick.

Warvington	Probably Anchorite	Unknown	Probably Priest	—	Cell, with ancient stone altar
Bablake, near Coventry	Anchorite	Unknown	Unknown	1362	Licensed by Roger, Bishop of Coventry
Coventry, St. John the Baptist	Anchorite	Robert de Worthin	—	1362	None

County Wilts.

Boyton	Unknown	—	—	—	Cell in tower, with fire-place
Devizes	Unknown	—	—	—	Chamber over chancel, probably recluse's cell
Darent	Unknown	—	—	—	Chamber over chancel, probably recluse's cell

County York.

PLACE.	RECLUSE.	NAME.	STATE OF LIFE.	DATE.	REMARKS.
Hampole, near Doncaster	Anchorage	Richard Rolle	Priest	1349	Wrote commentary on Psalter
Anderby, near N. Allerton	Anchoress	Margaret Kirkby	Vowess	1349	Friend of Richard Rolle
Pontefract, St. Eley's	Anchoress	Alice Ripas	Vowess	1464	—
Wakefield	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Uncertain	Recluse mentioned by Lydgate
Unknown	Anchoress	Sister to St. Elred	Cistercian nun	About 1140	St. Elred wrote <i>Rule of a Recluse</i> for her
Beverley	Anchorage	Robert	Unknown	Uncertain	—
Wath	Anchorage	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him legacy of 13/4
Peasholme, near York	Anchorage	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him legacy of 13/4
Kenby	Anchorage	Thomas Cope	Priest	1415	Henry, Lord Scrope, left him 6/8
Kirby	Anchorage	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him legacy of 13/4
Kurbebech	Anchorage	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Another legatee of Lord Scrope
Tadcaster	Anchoress	St. Bega	Virgin	7th cent.	Formerly called Calcasia, in a cell
Thorganby	Anchorage	Unknown	Unknown	1502	Lord Scrope left him 13/4

Wales.

Crickhowel	Anchorite	Probably a Priest	At St. Patricio's Church	Uncertain	Stone altar in cell
Llanthony	Anchorite	William de Lacey	Knight Priest, chaplain to Queen Maud	1103	Afterwards these two founded a monastery about 1110.
Llanthony	Anchorite	Ernicius		1103	
Llanthony	Anchorite	St. David	Solitary	6th cent.	Canonised patron saint of Wales.

Total number of Recluses on this list:—

Anchorites	...	...	...	...	77
Anchoresses	...	...	...	...	74+
Unknown which	...	...	...	...	25
Total	...	...	...	...	176

NOTE.—The plus sign after Anchoresses denotes the “many anchoresses” mentioned by Mabillon as living in the 6th century in and near the Premonstratensian Monastery of St. Radigund at the Church of the Holy Cross at Bradsole in Polton near Dover. If we put this number as low as four it will make the number of anchoresses in excess of the anchorites, which we believe to be correct.

Office from Bishop Lacy's "Pontifical" for Enclosing of Anchorites.

RECLUSIO ANCHORITARUM.

Ad includendum anchoritam. Si masculus et clericus fuerit, facit in medio chori, prostratus toto corpore, pedibus nudis, in oratione ; si laicus jacet extra hostium chori ; si femina jacet in occidentale parte ecclesiæ ubi mos est feminis orare. Episcopus, vel alius qui committetur Officium, indutus sacris vestibus preter casulam, cum ministris sacris indutis sedet in Presbiterio vel Vestiario donec cantor incipiat Responsorium. Here follow Psalms 6, 8, 19, 31, 34, 37, 40, 42, 50, 101, 103, 129, 130, 142, and then the Litany.

"In fine, vero letanie, veniat Episcopus cum ministris ad prostratum, cum cruce et thuribulo et aqua benedicta ; et proposita cruce ante eum, ter eum perlustrat inspergendo cum aqua benedicta et incensum similiter adhibendo." Here follow versicles and collects.

"Deinde Episcopus vel Officium agens cum alia persona venerabili subleuet prostratum, dans ei in manibus duos cereos ardentes, monens ut deinceps ferventer permaneat in amore Dei et proximi, quos singulis manibus tenendo, devote auscultet subdiaconum,

hanc lectionem clara voce legentem. Lectio Isaie prophete. 'Hec dicit Dominus. Vade, popule mea intra cubiculum tuum,' usque ad 'Indignatio non est mihi.'" Que perlecta subsequatur Diaconus legendo evangelium, secundum Lucam. 'Intravit JESUS in quoddam castellum,' ut in Festo Assumptionis Beate Mariæ; quo perlecto benedicantur vestes, etc. [two collects.] Finita benedictione et aspersis vestibibus aqua benedicta legat includendus professionem suam ante gradum altaris, et deferat ad altare qua ibi dimissa et altare osculato redeat ad gradum et ibidem flectens genua ter dicat hunc versum; Suscipe me Domine secundum eloquium tuum, etc. Quo ter dicto et choro tociens idem respondente statim cereos offerat et super candelabra ponat et sic redeat ante gradum; ibidem genua flectat, donec Episcopus amotis ejus vestibibus antiquis ipsum vestibibus novis jam benedictas induat, dicens, Exuat te Dominus veterem hominem qui secundum Deum factus est in justitia et sanctitate veritatis. Quo dicto incipiat Episcopus — Veni Creator Spiritus: Pater Noster: versicles and collect.

Hiis finitis faciat sermonem ad populum exponendo modum et formam vivendi includendo, et commendet includendum populo, ut orent pro eo; quo finito, dicat includendus si sacerdos fuerit Missam de Sancto Spiritu; si non fuerit sacerdos, dicat Episcopus si voluerit, vel alius sacerdos illam Missam. Missa dicta, ducat Episcopus per manum recludendum ad reclusorium. Et incipiat cantor antiphonam—Ingrediar locum tabernaculi

admirabilis. Ps. 41. Quem dum cantaverit personaliter incedat usque ad ostium reclusorii quo cum pervenerit, introeat Episcopus cum ministris; ceteris cum includendo, foris interim expectantibus; moxque Episcopus aspergens domum aqua benedicta incipiens antiphonam. Asperges me, etc. Et dicat, versicles. Ps. 140, 147, and collect.

Benedicchio domus—(oratio).

Benedicchio in domo — etc. Hiis peractis exeat Episcopus cum ceteris et alloquatur includendum, et dicat, Si vult intrare intret. Dum autem, intraveritthurificetur et aspergatur aqua benedicta. In Paradisum deducant te angeli, in tuo adventu suscipiant te martires; perducant te in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem. Ps. 113. Responsia. Regnum mundi et omnem ornamentum seculi contempsi, propter amorem Domini mei JESU CHRISTI Quem vidi; Quem amavi; in Quem credidi; Quem dilexi.

Versus—Eructavit cor meum, etc.

Oremus. (Benediction : Prayer.)

Tunc Episcopus aspergat totam domum, et postea incenset, et tunc peragat officium extreme unctionis incipiens oraciones et antiphonam, et chorus de foris post cum eisdem antiphona decantata, dicatur super eum prostratum. Commendacio anima tua, usque ad impositionem defuncti super feretrum ne forte preventus morte careat hoc sancto servicio.

Quibus peractis, aperiatur sepulchrum; quod ingrediens ipse inclusus vel alius nomine suo cantet. Hec

requies in seculum seculi ; choro de foris cantante antiphonam, etc. Ps. 131. Tunc Episcopus aspergens parum pulveris super eum incipit antiphonam. De terra plasmasti ; choro decantanta Psalmum ut supra, et sic decantando omnes exeant ; Episcopo parum remanente et precipiente incluso, per obedienciam, ut surgat et in obediencia quod superest vite perficiat.

Et Episcopo egresso, obstruant ostium domus, finitoque Psalmo, cum antiphona et oracionibus, scilicet Trinitatis, etc., omnes discedent in pace.

Multi tamen, Prelati dicunt tunc officium extreme unctionis et commendationis, et finita oratione—Exaudi, Domine, preces nostras—obstruunt ostium domus, et intrans ecclesiam decantantes antiphonam de Beata Maria, vel de Sancto loci cum oratione et sic finiunt Officium.

Rule for Carmelite Recluses.

Lyne owre holy fadyr (pope) of Rome he ordeyned this rowls to all solytary men that takys the degre of an heremyte ; he byndis him thus to spende the nyght and the day to the lovinge of God. The begynning of the day is at midnight and an hermit shall rise at midnight fro Holy Rode day unto Easter day, and fro Easter day unto Holy Rode day in the dayeg (dawn ?) of the day. And he shall say for mateins of the day 40 Pater Noster and 40 Ave and 3 Credo and for Lauds 15 Pater 15 Ave and 1 Credo. And for Prime he shall say 12 Pater 12 Ave 1 Credo. And when he hath said Prime he shall hear Mass and after Mass he shall say for every howr 10 Pater 10 Ave and 1 Credo. After that he shall go to his Oratorye and have a meditation of the Passion of Christe or of some other holy thing. For midday he shall say 10 Pater 10 Ave and 1 Credo. And then go to his mete after mete he shall say for all his good doors 30 Pater 30 Ave and 1 Credo, and our Lady's psautier. For Evensong he shall say 40 Pater Noster 40 Ave and 1 Credo. For Complyne he shall say 10 Pater 10 Ave and 1 Credo. And fro Complyne be sayde he shall keep silence. He shall faste every day in Lenton and Advent and the Postylls fast that is

to say fro Holy Thursday unto Whitsunday. He shall be shrewyn and hoselde 3 tymes in the yere, at Chrystmesse, Easter and Whitsunday. He shall faste the Friday and Saturday through the yere. The Friday to brede and alle and potage. He shall ete no flesh but Christmasday, Epiph. St. Paul the ist Hermit, St. Anthony, All the feasts of Our Lady, the Ascension, Whitsunday, the feste of the Trinity, Corpus Xti, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and Peter and Paul, the feste of the Angels, of All Hallows, the feste of the Saint of the Cell and the dedication of the Cell. Also he shall lie in his kirtell gyrdede with de gyrdill or with a Cord. He shall wer the heyr but if he be weyke and may not suffer it he shall wer shoon with owtin (?) hoods. And he shall be gunede (buried ?) when he is dede in hys habyt as he gothe.

The sum of the Pater Noster on the day is 197 and als many Ave Maria and 14 Credo beside our Lady's psalter.

This is ye charge of an hermytis lyffe.

MS. 192 Lambeth (15th century).

The booke of the institution and proper deeds of religious Carmelites.

INDEX OF RECLUSES.

	PAGE		PAGE
ABRAHAM, St. - - -	56	Cotelinde - - -	161
Adelheid - - -	178	Cotestina - - -	161
Agnes - - -	97	Cyra - - -	57, 58
Alexandra - - -	62		
Alice - - -	102	DANKBURCH - - -	177
Alicia - - -	100	Darerca - - -	84
Anatolius - - -	52	David, St. - - -	13
Asceline, St. - - -	122	Delphina, St. - - -	119
Ava - - -	166	Diemoth - - -	165
Azella, St. - - -	64	Diemutha - - -	161
		Domnine - - -	67
BACHILDE - - -	159	Domnica or Drusa - - -	86
Basilla - - -	129	Drusa - - -	86
Bees or Bega - - -	71	Drutlindes - - -	179
Bega - - -	85	Dunstan, St. - - -	1, 11
Benedicta - - -	135	Durochier, A. - - -	128
Berta - - -	200		
Bertha - - -	116	ELA - - -	99
Bertilie - - -	115	Elizabeth, Lady - - -	97
Blois, Egyptienne de - - -	128	Elizabeth, Dame - - -	97
Bourgotte, Alix la - - -	127	Emoza - - -	168
Breaca - - -	71	Emiliano, St. - - -	207
Bride - - -	83	Ephrem, St. - - -	57
Bridgit - - -	84	Ermelinda - - -	180
Buona - - -	138	Ernicus - - -	14
Burian - - -	86	Etheldritha - - -	73
		Euphrosyne - - -	66-67
CARDONE, CATHERINE DE - - -	152	Eva - - -	196-200
Charitas - - -	178		
Christina Mirabilis, St. - - -	186	FAUSSARD, V. GUILLEMETTE	
Christina - - -	14	DE - - -	130-132
Cilia - - -	156	Fernandez, B. Maria de - - -	216
Clopton, Dame Joan - - -	101	Floria - - -	129
Colette, St. - - -	3, 46, 123-127	Foster, Katharine - - -	100
Colyford, Beatrice de - - -	99	Fosses, Recluse of - - -	200
Constanza - - -	212	Frances - - -	82
		Frideswitha - - -	76

	PAGE		PAGE
GALLA - - - -	135	Lintrude, St. - - -	111-113
Gemma - - - -	149	Liutbirga - - - -	162
Germaine - - - -	88	Lucy, St. - - - -	77, 78
Ghent, Simon of - - -	98	Lucy - - - -	138
Gibrien, St. - - - -	83		
Godrich - - - -	16	MAN, KATERYN - - -	100
Goluennus - - - -	9	Marana, B. - - - -	57-59
Goeznoneus - - - -	9	Maron, St. - - - -	67
Guthlac - - - -	9	Margaretha - - - -	204
		Marguèrite - - - -	129
HAZEKA - - - -	171	Marina - - - -	209
Helmtrude - - - -	167	Mariana - - - -	212
Herluka - - - -	168	Maria Anna de JESUS - -	213
Hermensende - - - -	130	Mary - - - -	56-57
Heton, Isolde - - - -	32	Maxentia - - - -	85
Herondine - - - -	136	Mechtilde, B. - - - -	77
Hergods, Pirona - - -	205	Mechtilde, St. - - - -	173
Hiltrude, St. - - - -	3, 184	Melania - - - -	60-62
Hildeburg - - - -	121	Modwena - - - -	87
Houlde - - - -	111	Monégondes - - - -	115
		Montau, Dorothea von - -	174
IDA - - - -	83	Monnima - - - -	84
Ita or Bride - - - -	178	Murate - - - -	6, 138
Ivera - - - -	186		
		NEOT, St. - - - -	12
JOANNA - - - -	127	Newchirche, Lucy de - -	99
Juliana, Mother - - -	44, 90-97	Ninnoc - - - -	70
Julia della Réna - - -	148		
Judith - - - -	78, 79, 81	ORIA - - - -	210-212
Juetta - - - -	191-196	Osmanna - - - -	85
Justina - - - -	143		
Jutte - - - -	172	PAESIA - - - -	55, 56
		Pannoncelle - - - -	128
KEBENINA - - - -	159	Pansemne - - - -	66
Kentigerne, St. - - -	87	Paulina - - - -	178
Kerburga - - - -	167	Paphnutius - - - -	54-55
Kerhilde - - - -	160	Pega - - - -	72-73
Keyna, St. - - - -	70	Pelagia - - - -	59-60
Kirkby, Margaret - - -	103	Piale - - - -	83
Kunegunde - - - -	177	Poore, Richard - - - -	98
		Possenna - - - -	82
LACIE, DE WILLIAM - - -	13	Potamia - - - -	207
Landrade, St. - - - -	181-182	Promptia - - - -	82
Liberata, St. - - - -	208	Pusinna - - - -	111

	PAGE		PAGE
RACHILDR - - -	164	Tusca - - -	133-135
Radegonde, St. - - -	52	Tygris - - -	113, 114
Redempte - - -	136		
Reginlinde - - -	162	UDALGARTHA - - -	160
Richilde - - -	165	Ulphe - - -	117
Roger - - -	14		
Romula - - -	136	VAUDRU - - -	183
Rosalia - - -	138	Vérène - - -	63
Rose, St., of Viterbo - - -	142	Vintilla, St. - - -	209
		Viridiana, B. - - -	139-141
SALOME - - -	78-80	Vodrière la Joanna - - -	127
Sara - - -	65		
Shardelow, Dame J. - - -	100	WALTRUDE - - -	183
Sibillina of Pavia, B. - - -	146-148	Wakelyn - - -	105
Silvia - - -	137	Werntrude - - -	178
Stapelton, Emma - - -	105	Wezala - - -	178
Syncletica - - -	63	Wiborado, St. - - -	3, 154-156
Syre - - -	110	Wilburgis - - -	177
		Withburge - - -	74
TARENTE, ANCHORESSES OF - - -	97	Withburge II. - - -	75
Tarsice - - -	108	Woyslava - - -	179
Teuteria - - -	133-135	Wulfric - - -	11
Thais - - -	54-55		
Theocus - - -	17	XIRA - - -	216-217
Tibba - - -	75		
Trojecia - - -	108-109	YVETTA - - -	191-196

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